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CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT FUND PLAN
FOR
FFY 2006-2007

This Plan describes the CCDF program to be conducted by the State for the period 10/1/05 – 9/30/07. As provided for in the applicable statutes and regulations, the Lead Agency has the flexibility to modify this program at any time, including changing the options selected or described herein.

The official text of the applicable laws and regulations govern, and the Lead Agency acknowledges its responsibility to adhere to them regardless of the fact that, for purposes of simplicity and clarity, the specific provisions printed herein are sometimes paraphrases of, or excerpts and incomplete quotations from, the full text.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 162.57 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

(Form ACF 118 Approved OMB Number: 0970-0114 expires 05-31-2006)

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STATE PLAN FOR CCDF SERVICES
FOR THE PERIOD 10/1/05 – 9/30/07

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AMENDMENTS LOG

Child Care and Development Services Plan for
For the period: 10/1/05 -- 9/30/07

SECTION AMENDED	EFFECTIVE/ PROPOSED EFFECTIVE DATE	DATE SUBMITTED TO ACF	DATE APPROVED BY ACF

Instructions:

- 1) Lead Agency completes the first 3 columns and sends a photocopy of this Log (showing the latest amendment sent to ACF) and the amended section(s) to the ACF Regional contact. A copy of the Log, showing the latest amendment pending in ACF, is retained in the Lead Agency's Plan.
- 2) ACF completes column 4 and returns a photocopy of the Log to the grantee.
- 3) The Lead Agency replaces this page in the Plan with the copy of the Log received from ACF showing the approval date.

Note: This process depends on repeated subsequent use of the same Log page over the life of the Plan. At any time the Log should reflect all amendments, both approved and pending in ACF. The Lead Agency is advised to retain those "old" plan pages that are superseded by amendments in a separate appendix to its Plan.

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**PART 1
ADMINISTRATION**

The agency shown below has been designated by the Chief Executive Officer of the State (or Territory), to represent the State (or Territory) as the Lead Agency. The Lead Agency agrees to administer the program in accordance with applicable Federal laws and regulations and the provisions of this Plan, including the assurances and certifications appended hereto. (658D, 658E)

1.1 Lead Agency Information (as designated by State chief executive officer)

Name of Lead Agency: **Georgia Department of Human Resources**

Address of Lead Agency:

Two Peachtree St., NW

Suite 29-250

Atlanta, GA 30303-3142

Name and Title of the Lead Agency's Chief Executive Officer:

B. J. Walker, Commissioner

Phone Number: **404-651-6314**

Fax Number: **404-651-8669**

E-Mail Address: bjwalker@dhr.state.ga.us

Web Address for Lead Agency (if any): <http://www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov>

1.2 State Child Care (CCDF) Contact Information (day-to-day contact)

Name of the State Child Care Contact (CCDF): **Gail Ormsby**

Title of State Child Care Contact: **Unit Manager, Child Care Unit**

Address:

Division of Family and Children Services

Child Care Unit

Two Peachtree St., NW

Suite 21-293

Atlanta, GA 30303-3142

Phone Number: **404-657-3441**

Fax Number: **404-463-3993**

E-Mail Address: gaormsby@dhr.state.ga.us

Phone Number for child care subsidy program information (for the public) (if any):

404-657-3434

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Web Address for child care subsidy program information (for the public) (if any):

<http://www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/caps>

1.3 Estimated Funding

The Lead Agency estimates that the following amounts will be available for child care services and related activities during the 1-year period: October 1, 2005 through September 30, 2006. (§98.13(a))

CCDF: **\$158,230,685**

Federal TANF Transfer to CCDF: **\$29.7 Million**

Direct Federal TANF Spending on Child Care: **\$0**

State CCDF Maintenance of Effort Funds: **\$22,182,651**

State Matching Funds: **\$30,559,821**

Total Funds Available: **\$240,673,157**

1.4 Estimated Administration Cost

The Lead Agency estimates that the following amount (and percentage) of Federal CCDF and State Matching Funds will be used to administer the program (not to exceed 5 percent): \$ **10,924,525** (**5 %**). (658E(c)(3), §§98.13(a), 98.52)

1.5 Administration of the Program

Does the Lead Agency directly administer and implement all services, programs and activities funded under the CCDF Act, including those described in Part 5.1 – Activities & Services to Improve the Quality and Availability of Child Care, Quality Earmarks and Set-Aside?

☐ Yes. Skip questions 1.6 and 1.7. Go to Section 1.8.

☒ No, and the following describes how the Lead Agency maintains overall control when services or activities are provided through other agencies: (658D(b)(1)(A), §98.11)

The Georgia Department of Human Resources Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) will maintain administrative control by following the regulations set forth in 658D(b)(1)(A), §98.11).

Within the Department of Human Resources Division of Family and Children Services, the Child Care Unit manages the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program at the state level. County Departments of Family and Children Services determine eligibility for subsidized child care services.

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Fiscal management of the program responsibilities remains at the state level. The local County Departments, the DFCS regional accounting offices, or a private for-profit contractor issues payments to providers. In 132 counties, local County Departments deliver child care provider management services. In 27 counties, a private for-profit contractor delivers child care provider services.

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is responsible for child care licensing, management of the CCDF quality set-aside and earmarked funds; and coordination of statewide early care and education initiatives in order to obtain a more streamlined early childhood system in Georgia. As a recipient of Federal funds DECAL will comply with the approved plan and all Federal requirements.

1.6 Determining Eligibility

For child care services funded under §98.50 (e.g., certificates, vouchers, grants/contracts for slots based on individual eligibility), does the Lead Agency itself: (§98.11)

- Determine individual eligibility of non-TANF families?
☒ Yes.
☐ No. If no, identify the name and type of agency that determines eligibility of non-TANF families for child care:
- Determine individual eligibility of TANF families?
☒ Yes.
☐ No. If no, identify the name and type of agency that determines eligibility of TANF families for child care:
- Assist parents in locating child care?
☒ Yes.
☐ No. If no, identify the name and type of agency that assists parents:
- Make payments to providers and/or parents?
☐ Yes.
☒ No. If no, identify the name and type of agency that makes payments:

In 132 counties, DFCS directly pays child care providers for subsidized child care services. Providers in the remaining 27 counties are paid for subsidized child care services through a private for-profit contractor, MAXIMUS, Inc.

1.7 Non-Governmental Entities

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Is any entity named in response to section 1.6 a non-governmental entity? (658D(b), §§98.10(a), 98.11(a))

X Yes, and the following entities named in 1.6 are non-governmental:

MAXIMUS, Inc. is a non-governmental, private for-profit contractor.

☐ No.

1.8 Use of Private Donated Funds

Will the Lead Agency use private donated funds to meet a part of the matching requirement of the CCDF pursuant to §98.53(e)(2) and (f)?

☐ Yes, The name and type of entity designated to receive private donated funds is:
Name:
Address:
Contact:
Type:

X No.

1.9 Use of State Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Expenditures for CCDF-Eligible Children

1.9.1 During this plan period, will State expenditures for Pre-K programs be used to meet any of the CCDF maintenance of effort (MOE) requirement?

☐ Yes, and:

() The State assures that its level of effort in full day/full year child care services has not been reduced, pursuant to §98.53(h)(1).

(%) Estimated % of the MOE requirement that will be met with pre-K expenditures.

If the State uses Pre-K expenditures to meet more than 10% of the MOE requirement, the following describes how the State will coordinate its Pre-K and child care services to expand the availability of child care (§98.53(h)(4)):

X No.

1.9.2 During this plan period, will State expenditures for Pre-K programs be used to meet any of the CCDF Matching Fund requirement? (§98.53(h))

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☐ Yes, and

(%) Estimated % of the Matching Fund requirement that will be met with pre-K expenditures.

If the State uses Pre-K expenditures to meet more than 10% of the Matching Fund requirement, the following describes how the State will coordinate its Pre-K and child care services to expand the availability of child care (§98.53(h)(4)):

X No.

1.9.3 If the State answered yes to 1.9.1 or 1.9.2, the following describes State efforts to ensure that pre-K programs meet the needs of working parents: (§98.53(h)(2))

1.10 Improper Payments

1.10.1 How does the Lead Agency define improper payments?

Improper payments are defined as any payment resulting in an overpayment or underpayment to a client or provider.

Overpayments to providers occur when a provider receives payments for care not received, when a provider receives payments for times care is not authorized, when a provider receives payments for care when the provider did not meet CAPS requirements, or when the agency makes a payment/reimbursement error.

A client overpayment occurs when a client fails to report accurate information during the application process; when a client fails to report changes that affect eligibility in a timely manner; and/or when the agency miscalculates benefits. Overpayments are categorized as intentional program violations, administrative errors, or inadvertent errors.

Underpayments exist when the agency's portion of the cost of care was not correctly calculated.

1.10.2 Has your State developed strategies to prevent, measure, identify, reduce and/or collect improper payments? (§98.60(i), §98.65, §98.67)

X Yes, and these strategies are:

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The Child Care Unit works closely with the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Office of Investigative Services (OIS). All clients and providers who are suspected of intentional program violations (IPVs) are referred to the Office of Investigative Services (OIS). The results of the OIS investigation are sent to the county office or to MAXIMUS, Inc., the contractor managing payments to child care providers. All claims negotiated by OIS are pursued, tracked, collected and reported.

Strategies used to prevent, measure and reduce improper payments:

- CCDF funds are used to staff two positions with the Office of Investigative Services (OIS). These staff positions are used exclusively for investigating suspected child care overpayments. The referrals for investigation increased over 100 % from the previous fiscal year because of these new positions.
- County staff and MAXIMUS, Inc. refer all suspected intentional program violations to OIS.
- Repayment by providers occurs by offsetting claims by one-half (50 %) of future payments until the claim has been recouped in full. Authorization may be given to offset amounts lower than one-half of the monthly reimbursement in hardship cases. Client repayments can be negotiated as low as \$10 per month.
- Reports are issued by OIS, indicating the number of referrals per county. Regional program specialists provide training and technical assistance to counties about the referral process.
- Potential improper payments were discovered when cross-checking DHR contract payments to providers participating in the Head Start program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Corrections were made in DHR contracts as a result.
- Positive outreach activities, such as newsletters, inform providers of the importance of accurate invoicing procedures.

Two reports are used to measure and tracking improper payments and referrals. The OIS Referral report tracks the number of referrals made to OIS by county. The Child Care Error and Overpayment report tracks the number of errors and intentional program violations, as well as the total dollar amount for each overpayment in each county.

☐ No. If no, are there plans underway to determine and implement such strategies?

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- ☐ Yes.
☐ No.

1.10.3 Has your State developed strategies to identify errors in the determination of client eligibility?

X Yes, and these strategies are:

Errors in eligibility are identified through Child Care Case Accuracy Reviews. These accuracy reviews are conducted by county supervisory staff who select samples from active and recently closed cases. Missing or incorrect items are designated as either “errors” or “deficiencies.” Items affecting eligibility or the payments issued on behalf of the family (rates fees, etc.) are considered “errors” if incorrect. All other items are considered “deficiencies.”

The eligibility determination section of the Case Accuracy Review includes a review of the following: child care application, standard of promptness, need for care, residency, eligible children, income, family unit size, and certification period. A review of the fee assessment is also conducted. The Child Care Case Accuracy Review serves a tool for the county office to evaluate error and deficiency trends. Once trends are identified, training to address the areas of errors and/or deficiencies can be conducted.

- ☐ No. If no, are there plans underway to determine and implement such strategies?
☐ Yes.
☐ No.

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**PART 2
DEVELOPING THE CHILD CARE PROGRAM**

2.1 Consultation and Coordination

2.1.1 Lead Agencies are required to *consult* with appropriate agencies and *coordinate* with other Federal, State, local, tribal (if applicable) and private agencies providing child care and early childhood development services (§98.12, §98.14(a),(b), §98.16(d)). Indicate the entities with which the Lead Agency has consulted or coordinated (as defined below), by checking the appropriate box(es) in the following table.

Consultation involves the participation of an appropriate agency in the development of the State Plan. At a minimum, Lead Agencies must consult with representatives of general purpose local governments (noted by the asterisk in the chart below).

Coordination involves the coordination of child care and early childhood development services, including efforts to coordinate across multiple entities, both public and private (for instance, in connection with a State Early Childhood Comprehensive System (SECCS) grant or infant-toddler initiative). At a minimum, Lead Agencies must coordinate with (1) other Federal, State, local, Tribal (if applicable), and/or private agencies responsible for providing child care and early childhood development services, (2) public health (including the agency responsible for immunizations and programs that promote children's emotional and mental health), (3) employment services / workforce development, (4) public education, and (5) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and (5) any Indian Tribes in the State receiving CCDF funds (noted by the asterisks in the chart below).

	Consultation	Coordination
• Representatives of local government	X *	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Indian Tribes/Tribal Organizations, when such entities exist within the boundaries of the State	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Other Federal, State, local, Tribal (if applicable), and private agencies providing child care and early childhood development services.	X	X *
• State/Tribal agency (agencies) responsible for		
○ Public health	X	X *
○ Employment services / workforce development	X	X *
○ Public education	X	X *
○ TANF	X	X *
○ State pre-kindergarten programs	X	X
○ Head Start programs	X	X
○ Programs that promote inclusion for children with special needs	X	X

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	Consultation	Coordination
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Other: Child and Adult Care Food Program & Summer Food Services Program Family Connection Partnership First Lady's Children's Cabinet	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

** Required.*

For each box checked above, (a) identify the agency providing the service and (b) describe the consultation and coordination efforts, if any. Descriptions must be provided for any consultation or coordination required by statute or regulation.

Representatives of local government

Collaborative child care partners and agencies, child care providers, local DFCS office representatives statewide, and DFCS regional staff were given preliminary notice of the development of the draft of the State Plan. The 2006-2007 State Plan and pre-print were posted on the CAPS web site for easy access. Input was received from Bright From the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, and Office of Investigative Services, as well as partners outside of government. These recommendations were incorporated into the draft of the plan when feasible.

The revised 2006-2007 State Plan was posted on the CAPS web site for review and public comment. Again, feedback was solicited from partners, child care providers, parents and other stakeholders.

Other Federal, State, local, Tribal (if applicable), and private agencies providing child care and early childhood development services.

- **Child and Adult Care Food Program & Summer Food Services Program**
<http://www.dec.state.ga.us/NS/NutritionServicesMain.aspx>

The Nutrition Services Division of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for administering the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) for the state of Georgia. The goal of these programs is to ensure that children and adults throughout Georgia have access to nutritious meals while they are in a day care setting and during the summer when school is not in session. Low-income families that may not be able to provide nutritious meals to their dependents when they are at home can be assured that they are receiving meals that meet the meal requirements established by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the CACFP and SFSP. These programs help to address the issues of hunger and malnutrition and the negative effects that they can have on an individual's health and educational development and growth. In January 2004, informal providers were allowed to participate in the CACFP.

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Increased participation in these programs should result in the overall improvement of the nutritional status of Georgians.

- **Smart Start Georgia is a partnership among DHR/Child Care Unit, the State of Georgia, Bright From the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation, United Ways of Georgia, and the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. It is dedicated to improving the quality of early childhood education programs in Georgia. The Smart Start Georgia's early learning initiatives (www.smartstartga.org) include: the Early Childhood Educators INCENTIVE\$ program which is a salary supplement program available statewide; and the SCHOLARSHIPS program which gives providers an opportunity to earn a diploma, degree or certificate in child development or early childhood education.**

Another Smart Start Georgia initiative provides training and technical assistance to centers, group homes and family child care providers in selected counties that are striving for excellence and that serve a minimum of twenty-five percent low-income children (i.e. eligible for Child and Adult Care Food Program). Training and Technical Assistance includes working with directors and staff to identify program needs, set goals, provide specialized training and create links to resources as centers and providers strive for state or national accreditation. Effective June 30, 2005, the responsibilities of Smart Start Georgia will be transferred to Bright From the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.

- **In addition, the Child Care Unit manager meets with child care providers as needed to discuss issues related to subsidized child care in Georgia.**

State/Tribal agency (agencies) responsible for Public Health

Bright From the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) in collaboration with the Georgia Department of Human Resources facilitates work with the Division of Public Health, as well as other entities, through the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) planning grant. This grant is funded to the state through the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau, in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

- **Babies Can't Wait <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/bcw/index.asp>**

Babies Can't Wait (BCW) is Georgia's statewide interagency service delivery system for infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities and their families. BCW is established by Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act which guarantees all eligible children, regardless of their disability, access to services that will enhance their development. The Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health is the lead agency administering the Babies Can't Wait Program in Georgia. The

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Division ensures that services are provided in accordance with federal guidelines; families have access to the services which are needed to enhance their child's development; and training is available to ensure that professionals who work with children and families have up-to-date information. Babies Can't Wait is administered through 19 District offices throughout the state. Through the 19 offices, children and families in every county in Georgia can access early intervention services. Inclusion Coordinators at the child care resource and referral agencies coordinate and collaborate with Babies Can't Wait to link child care providers and families to training and appropriate services.

State/Tribal agency (agencies) responsible for Employment Services and Workforce Development

Coordination between the Office of Family Independence (OFI) Units responsible for TANF/Employment Services and the Childcare and Parent Services Program is ongoing. Both the OFI Child Care Unit and TANF Unit ,s are within the Division of Family and Children Services in DHR. Coordination allows TANF applicants and recipients to access seamless child care services to support state approved work, education and training activities. TANF outlines the policy regarding work requirements for TANF recipients. The Child Care Unit manages the subsidized child care program. The units establish common requirements and regulations to the extent possible. Consultation between the units is constant to resolve any conflicting policy that would negatively affect the work participation requirements. TANF applicants and recipients who need child care to comply with their personal work plans receive priority when funds are limited; these families are not placed on a waiting list for child care assistance.

This collaboration is expected to yield:

- Affordable child care services for adults who receive TANF and need child care enabling the adults to meet the TANF work participation requirements.
- Seamless child care services for families as they transition from TANF to self-sufficiency.
- Integrated service delivery. The TANF, Food Stamps and CAPS programs are located in the county Department of Family and Children Services offices. This provides clients with easy access to the programs and facilitates communication between case managers who handle the client's related cases.

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- Child care services for TANF eligible clients who choose not to use their TANF months but still need child care in support of employment activities.
- Transfer of funds from the TANF program to CAPS increases the number of families who receive subsidized child care.
- Georgia Chambers of Commerce & Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education <http://www.gachamber.com/>

The Georgia Chamber of Commerce is the unified voice of the business community, aggressively advocating the business viewpoint in the shaping of public policy, encouraging ethical business practices and ensuring the state's future as economically prosperous, educationally competitive and environmentally responsible. The Georgia Chamber works to ensure the future health and strength of Georgia business through pro-active economic development programs and initiatives. The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education is an affiliate of the Georgia Chambers of Commerce. The Georgia Chamber works with the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (<http://www.gpee.org/>) to raise awareness of and find solutions for improving education in the state by focusing on the critical issues facing education including early learning.

State/Tribal agency (agencies) responsible for Public Education

- Georgia Department of Education (DOE)
<http://www.georgiastandards.org/index.asp>

Georgia offers universal public kindergarten in the public schools to five year olds. The Georgia Department of Education is required by the Quality Basic Education Act of 1985 to maintain a curriculum that specifies what students are expected to know in each subject and grade. Department of Education is implementing new Georgia Performance Standards that will drive both instruction and assessment for Georgia's teachers and students from kindergarten through high school. The performance standards provide clear expectations for assessment, instruction and student work. The Georgia Performance Standards include Math, English/Language Arts, Science and Social Studies.

Representatives from Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) participated in the development of the Georgia Performance Standards. In June 2004, DECAL revised the Content Standards of Georgia's Pre-K Program to reflect current educational research and align with Georgia's Quality Core Curriculum. The Content Standards provide the foundation for instruction in all Georgia Pre-K classrooms and include seven curriculum areas: Language and Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Creative Expression, Social and Emotional Development, and Physical

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Development. By coordinating with the Department of Education, DECAL is aligning the Pre-K Content Standards and the voluntary Early Learning Standards for children birth through three with the Georgia K-12 Performance Standards.

- Georgia Department of Adult and Technical Education (DTAE)
<http://www.dtae.org/>

DHR/Child Care Unit and Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning coordinate with the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE) to promote the professional development of child care providers. This collaboration allows caregivers to access local educational opportunities using the Georgia HOPE grants (http://www.gsfc.org/Main/dsp_main.cfm). The Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education supports, enhances, and expands statewide coordinated childhood care and education efforts and professional development initiatives. The collaboration yields increased access for child care providers to educational opportunities that enhance their ability to provide high quality care and education for Georgia's children.

- Georgia Professional Standards Commission <http://www.gapsc.com/>

The Professional Standards Commission (PSC) directs the preparation, certification, professional discipline and recruitment of educators in Georgia. Georgia offers certification in a variety of fields with specific subjects or grade levels assigned to each field. Among the teaching fields are Early Childhood Education (Preschool- 5th grade) and Preschool -12th grade fields (Special Education, Art, Music, etc.). Service fields and Leadership fields allow the educator to serve at all grade levels (Preschool-12th grade). In addition to full certification fields, endorsements to certificates are offered in teaching, service, and leadership areas. The commission provides a birth-five Early Childhood Teacher Certification available for participating private colleges and universities. The curricula for this degree will be guided by Georgia's Early Learning Standards. To ensure coordination, members of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission participate on the Georgia Early Guidelines Advisory Group (Refer to Section 5.2).

- Georgia Board of Regents <http://www.usg.edu/>

The Board of Regents oversees 34 institutions: four research universities, two regional universities, 13 state universities, two state colleges, and 13 two-year colleges. These institutions enroll more than 233,000 students and employ more than 9,000 faculty and 35,000 employees to provide teaching and related services to students and the communities in which they are located. Collaboration with the Board of Regents is expected to yield increased access for child care

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providers to educational opportunities that enhance their ability to provide high quality care and education for Georgia's children.

State/Tribal agency (agencies) responsible for TANF

The Child Care and TANF units are both housed in the Division of Family and Children Services. TANF outlines the policy regarding work requirements for TANF recipients. The Child Care Unit manages the subsidized child care program. The units establish common requirements and regulations to the extent possible. Consultation between the sections is constant to resolve any conflicting policy that would negatively affect the work participation requirements. TANF applicants and recipients who need child care to comply with their personal work plans receive priority when funds are limited; these families are not placed on a waiting list for child care assistance.

State/Tribal agency (agencies) responsible for State Pre-Kindergarten programs

- **Georgia's Pre- K Program administered by Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning**
<http://www.dec.state.ga.us/PreK/PreKMain.aspx>

DHR/Child Care Unit coordinates with Georgia's Pre-K program to increase the number of high quality child care settings available to eligible families and to expand the availability of services to more eligible children. This collaboration yields cost-effective utilization of funding streams; a higher quality of care and education with comprehensive services for children and their families; and enhanced developmental outcomes for children enrolled in these programs.

State/Tribal agency (agencies) responsible for Head Start

- **Head Start Collaboration Project at Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning**
<http://www.dec.state.ga.us/HeadStart/HeadStartMain.aspx>

DHR/Child Care Unit coordinates with the Head Start grantees and the Head Start Collaboration Project to increase the number of high quality child care settings available to eligible families. Service delivery is coordinated with the federally funded Head Start program to expand the availability of services to more eligible children (<http://www.georgiaheadstart.org/>). This collaboration yields cost-effective utilization of funding streams; a higher quality of care and education with comprehensive services for children and their families; and enhanced developmental outcomes for children enrolled in these programs.

Programs that promote inclusion for children with special needs

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- **Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies**

The Child Care and Development Fund supports the Inclusion Project through a contract between Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and each child care resource and referral (R&R) agency. Inclusion Coordinators are on staff in each child care resource and referral district. This project is the result of earlier planning by and funding from the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (<http://gcdd.georgia.gov>) and the Babies Can't Wait program within the Family Health Branch of the Division of Public Health. The goal of this coordination is to increase the number of high quality, inclusive child care settings available to families. This collaboration is expected to yield an increased number of referrals to child care providers, including family child care homes, child care learning centers and school age care programs for parents of children with disabilities; an increased number of referrals to community resources that link parents to support services, financial aid information, medical equipment, and other information; an increased distribution of materials on finding child care, inclusive child care programs, benefits of inclusion, Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Individual with Disabilities Education Act; accessible free technical assistance to providers through telephone consultation and site visits; training on a variety of topics related to children with special needs and the legal requirements for service provision; and access to a lending system of toys, books, posters, and curriculum kits that can be checked out by providers and parents of children with disabilities.

Other:

- **Family Connection Partnership** <http://www.georgiafamilyconnection.org/>

The Family Connection Partnership is a public/private partnership created by the State of Georgia and funders from the private sector. Family Connection Partnerships assist communities in addressing the serious challenges facing Georgia's children and families and serves as a resource to state agencies that work to improve the conditions of children and families. The partnerships works jointly with Family Connection community collaboratives, state, and national partners to improve results for Georgia's children and families. Each collaborative serves as the local decision-making body for its community and develops a plan with strategies to improve results in five areas: healthy children, children ready for school, children succeeding in school, strong families, and self-sufficient families. Collaboratives provide training and technical assistance customized to meet their communities' common and unique needs and support efforts in making better decisions locally; build and maintain relationships with public and private agencies and communities to share and combine resources, promote public policy, and improve services and supports for families; enhance public awareness, understanding, communication and commitment to improve results for children

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and families, and promote "what works" using research and evaluation practices that have proven to be effective in communities, while showcasing community successes. State partners include the Division of Family & Children Services, and Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. Local partnerships include the county Departments of Family and Children Services.

- First Lady's Children's Cabinet <http://www.opb.state.ga.us/safekids/>

Georgia's First Lady, Mrs. Mary Purdue, launched The First Lady's Children's Cabinet. The First Lady's Children's Cabinet collaborates actively in sharing resources and removing barriers to service delivery. Many departments and agencies of state government play vital roles in promoting the welfare of Georgia's children. Therefore, the Cabinet membership includes leaders from every state agency responsible for serving children including the Commissioner of the Department of Human Resources; the Commissioner of the Department of Community Health; the Commissioner of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning; the Director of the Children and Youth Coordinating Council, and the State Superintendent of Schools.

The Cabinet develops and implements a strategic plan for coordinating policy making and planning for all state agencies and programs that are responsible for children and their families. The Cabinet focuses on eliminating service gaps, eliminating service duplication, and reducing unnecessary expenditures by emphasizing prevention. The Cabinet will be accountable for the outcomes for Georgia's children as tracked in the *Annie E. Casey Kids Count*.

- 2.1.2 State Plan for Early Childhood Program Coordination. *Good Start, Grow Smart* encourages States to develop a plan for coordination across early childhood programs. Indicate which of the following best describes the current status of the State's efforts in this area.

- ☐ **Planning.** Indicate whether steps are under way to develop a plan. If so, describe the time frames for completion and/or implementation, the steps anticipated, and how the plan is expected to support early language, literacy, pre-reading and early math concepts.
- ☒ **Developing.** A plan is being drafted. The draft is included as Attachment A. **The draft is to be completed in May 2005.**
- ☐ **Developed.** A plan has been written but has not yet been implemented. The plan is included as Attachment ____
- ☐ **Implementing.** A plan has been written and is now in the process of being implemented. The plan is included as Attachment ____
- ☐ **Other (describe):**

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Describe the progress made by the State planning for coordination across early childhood programs since the date of submission of the 2004-2005 State Plan.

Georgia is in the second year of a five year strategic planning process, utilizing the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) planning grant, funded to the state through the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau, in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The purpose of the grant is to create a blueprint for the development of a comprehensive, high quality early childhood program of services to all children birth through five and their families.

This strategic planning process is facilitated by Bright From the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) in collaboration with the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR). Key partners in this initiative include the DHR/Division of Family and Children Services, the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Georgia Academy of Pediatrics, Family Connection Partnership, Head Start, Smart Start Georgia, Georgia Division of Public Health, and the Georgia Department of Education.

Indicate whether there is an entity that is responsible for ensuring that such coordination occurs. Indicate the four or more early childhood programs and/or funding streams that are coordinated and describe the nature of the coordination.

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (www.decal.state.ga.us) was created, in part, for the purpose of ensuring the coordination and administration of programs that provide services to all children in Georgia ages birth through five and their families. To meet this objective, DECAL utilizes the resources from multiple funding streams to help provide families with a high quality comprehensive services that promote the healthy development of their preschool children. These funding streams include the lottery-funded Pre-K program; the state of Georgia; the federally funded Head Start program; the federal quality and earmark portions of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF); the federally funded USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program; the Summer Food Service Program, and private sector funding through Smart Start Georgia. This coordinated effort allows Georgia to focus its resources for preschool children and their families in a manner that promotes high quality services coupled with rigorous oversight and accountability.

Describe the **results** or expected results of this coordination. Discuss how these results relate to the development and implementation of the State's early learning guidelines, plans for professional development, and outcomes for children.

The expected results of this coordinated effort are to ensure that all preschool children enter school with the necessary skills and abilities to be successful. A broad range of services that help support the healthy development of children and their families will be provided to accomplish these results.

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Georgia's Early Learning Standards give teachers and parents a set of guidelines to provide appropriate educational experiences that promote the cognitive, physical, social and emotional development of children birth through three years old. These Early Learning Standards provide the foundation for a set of seamless standards that link to the Pre-K Standards, the Head Start Standards and the Georgia Performance Standards for K-12th grade that underpin Georgia's comprehensive system of early childhood education for children birth through five years old.

Describe how the State's plan supports or will support continued coordination among the programs. Are changes anticipated in the plan?

In the process of developing the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems strategic plan, DECAL and its collaborative partners will design and implement a statewide coordinated system of training and technical assistance; a comprehensive plan for the continued professional development of all early care and education professionals; and a clearly-defined set of benchmarks to measure the healthy development and well-being of preschool children and their families.

2.2 Public Hearing Process

Describe the Statewide public hearing process held to provide the public an opportunity to comment on the provision of child care services under this Plan. (658D(b)(1)(C), §98.14(c)) At a minimum, the description must provide:

Date(s) of statewide notice of public hearing: **March 30, 2005**

Manner of notifying the public about the statewide hearing:

A press release was sent to all newspapers in the state. Advertisements were purchased in major newspapers. The hearing notice included the address of the web site where a copy of the draft of the plan could be reviewed. In addition, the dates of the statewide hearings were included in the GACAPS newsletter distributed to providers who care for children who receive subsidized care.

All resource and referral (R&R) agencies and local county Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) offices received notice of the hearings and flyers to post that advertised the hearings. These agencies also received electronic versions of the draft of the plan so that the plan could be printed and distributed as requested. Staff at the R&Rs and the DFCS offices were encouraged to inform parents, providers, and others interested in child care issues about the hearings in their areas. Staff at the R&Rs and DFCS offices notified parents, providers and others that Spanish interpreters were scheduled to provide services at the public hearings in Atlanta, Gainesville and Macon.

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Letters and e-mails were sent to collaborative partners, government agencies, advocacy groups, etc. announcing the hearings. Attached to the e-mails was an electronic version of the draft of the state plan.

The hearing notice and dates were posted on the Childcare and Parent Services web site (<http://www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/caps> and Bright From the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning website www.dec.state.ga.us .

Date(s) of public hearing(s) and hearing sites:

April 19, 2005 – Gainesville, GA
April 21, 2005 – Augusta, GA
April 28, 2005 – Rome, GA
April 28, 2005 – Savannah, GA
May 3, 2005 – Albany, GA
May 4, 2005 – Columbus, GA
May 5, 2005 – Macon, GA
May 5, 2005 – Atlanta, GA

How the content of the plan was made available to the public in advance of the public hearing(s):

The hearing notice included the address of the web site where a copy of the draft of the plan could be reviewed. All resource and referral (R&R) agencies and local county Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) offices received notice of the hearings and flyers to post that advertised the hearings. These agencies also received electronic versions of the draft of the plan so that the plan could be printed and distributed as requested.

A brief summary of the public comments from this process will be included as Attachment **B**.

2.3 Public-Private Partnerships

Describe (1) the activities, including planned activities, to encourage public-private partnerships that promote private-sector involvement in meeting child care needs, and (2) the results or expected results of these activities. (658D(b)(1), §98.16(d))

Georgia continues to pursue creative approaches to involve the private sector in meeting child care needs. Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning promotes public-private sector collaboration on child care issues. The department encourages partnerships by:

- **Funding the statewide network of Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) agencies. The R&Rs expand partnerships through their outreach efforts in the communities where they are located. These efforts include corporate lunch-**

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and-learns, work site exhibits, and presentations to educate and provide resources to help meet the child care needs of a company's employees. R&Rs schedule community advisory committee meetings where representatives from their region's corporate community provide advice, learn about resources, and offer other resources to support their communities. In addition, there are scheduled annual collaborative luncheons bringing the regions' private and public partners together to discuss broader child care challenges and to work collaboratively to meet those challenges over the next year. The expected result of these efforts is to provide a comprehensive and coordinated effort to serve the community.

- Collaborating with the programs participating in the Smart Start Georgia public-private partnership (<http://www.smartstartga.org/intro.php>). Smart Start Georgia is a public-private partnership among the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation, the United Ways of Georgia, the Georgia Chambers of Commerce, and more that 40 additional supporting organizations.
- Participating on boards such as the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, which is comprised of private sector representatives including the statewide Chambers of Commerce, to inform the business and educational communities on the importance of quality early learning (<http://www.gpee.org>).
- Promoting the state's corporate tax credit provisions that allow companies to take 75% of their investment in employer sponsored care as a tax credit (<http://www2.state.ga.us/departments/dor/inctax/childcare5607838.shtml>). The provision also allows 100% of their investment in construction of on site facilities as a tax credit.

PART 3
CHILD CARE SERVICES OFFERED

3.1 Description of Child Care Services

3.1.1 Certificate Payment System

Describe the overall child care certificate process, including, at a minimum:

- (1) a description of the form of the certificate (98.16(k));

In 132 non-automated counties, the certificate is a multi-party agreement among the parent/guardian, child care provider and local county Department of Family and Children Services. The certificate details the conditions and terms of the agreement for carrying out the child care plan as selected by the family. The parent, the provider and the case manager sign the certificate. The purpose of the agreement is to ensure that all parties will have a clear understanding of their responsibilities.

In the 27 automated counties where a private for-profit contractor manages payments to providers, the child care certificates are computer-generated authorizations that the family takes to the provider. The certificate, coupled with Rights and Responsibilities form signed by the provider, details the conditions and terms of the agreement for carrying out the child care plan as selected by the family.

- (2) a description of how the certificate program permits parents to choose from a variety of child care settings by explaining how a parent moves from receipt of the certificate to choice of the provider; (658E(c)(2)(A)(iii), 658P(2), 98.2, 98.30(c)(4) & (e)(1) & (2))

Families have the right to choose their child care provider. It is the parent/guardian/responsible person's duty to determine if the provider can meet the family's child care needs. The caseworker gives information on making informed child care choices, if the family requests assistance. Child care resource and referral (R&R) agencies are available in all areas of the state. Case managers may refer parents to the R&R agency for assistance in making informed child care choices.

Parents/guardians may choose care from licensed or commissioned centers; licensed or commissioned group homes; registered family day care providers; legally exempt centers or group homes; neighbors, relatives or friends. Informal providers may care for the child in the provider's home. Care in the

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child's home is limited to relatives of the child. Relatives are defined as aunts, uncles, grandparents, great-grandparents, and adult siblings. (Adult siblings who are reimbursed for providing child care must live outside the child's home).

The child care certificate is issued to the parent/guardian on the day that the family is determined eligible for services. The family's choice of provider prevails if the provider meets program requirements. The parent/guardian then has three service days to make contact with the child care provider and enroll the child in care. The certificate is valid when all parties have signed in non-automated counties or when the authorization is sent to providers in automated counties.

Registration fees, up to a maximum of \$50 per child, per provider, per year, are reimbursed.

- (3) if the Lead Agency is also providing child care services through grants and contracts, estimate the mixture of \$98.50 services available through certificates versus grants/contracts, and explain how it ensures that parents offered child care services are given the option of receiving a child care certificate.
(98.30(a) & (b)) This may be expressed in terms of dollars, number of slots, or percentages of services.

Not Applicable

- 3.1.2 In addition to offering certificates, does the Lead Agency also have grants or contracts for child care slots?

☐ Yes, and the following describes the types of child care services, the process for accessing grants or contracts, and the range of providers that will be available through grants or contracts: (658A(b)(1), 658P(4), §§98.16(g)(1), 98.30(a)(1) & (b))

X No

- 3.1.3 The Lead Agency must allow for in-home care but may limit its use. Does the Lead Agency limit the use of in-home care in any way?

X Yes, and the limits and the reasons for those limits are: (§§98.16(g)(2), 98.30(e)(1)(iv))

Georgia permits relatives to care for children in the children's homes. These relatives must be grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles or adult siblings to the child. The adult siblings must reside outside of the child's home. Care in the child's home is limited to relative caregivers to comply with the requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

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☐ No

3.1.4 Are all of the child care services described in 3.1.1 above (including certificates) offered throughout the State? (658E(a), §98.16(g)(3))

☒ Yes

☐ No, and the following are the localities (political subdivisions) and the services that are not offered:

3.2 Payment Rates for the Provision of Child Care

The statute at 658E(c)(4) and the regulations at §98.43(b)(1) require the Lead Agency to establish payment rates for child care services that ensure eligible children equal access to comparable care.

These rates are provided as Attachment C.

The attached payment rates were or will be effective as of **April 2005**.

The following is a summary of the facts relied on by the State to determine that the attached rates are sufficient to ensure equal access to comparable child care services provided to children whose parents are not eligible to receive child care assistance under the CCDF and other governmental programs. Include, at a minimum:

- The month and year when the local market rate survey(s) was completed: **will be completed May 2005**. (§98.43(b)(2))
- A copy of the Market Rate Survey instrument and a summary of the results of the survey will be provided as Attachment **D** (once complete).
- How the payment rates are adequate to ensure equal access based on the results of the above noted local market rate survey (i.e., the relationship between the attached payment rates and the market rates observed in the survey): (§98.43(b))

Georgia pays the DFCS portion of the cost directly to the providers and requires the family to pay the assessed fee directly to the provider. In most areas of the state, providers accept the reimbursement rate from DFCS without charging families additional amounts. This allows equal access to child care services for parents who receive child care subsidies.

- Additional facts that the Lead Agency relies on to determine that its payment rates ensure equal access include: (§98.43(d))

Georgia has widely differential child care rates statewide. In urban and suburban areas, the cost of care is higher than in small towns and in rural areas. Georgia has divided the state into three payment "zones." Child care

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is reimbursed at the highest rate in the zone where the market rate has demonstrated that care is more expensive.

Child care costs vary by the type of child care setting. Child care costs are higher for infants and toddlers, moderate for preschoolers, and lower for school age children. Georgia has structured the reimbursements to providers so that care for the infants and toddlers is reimbursed at the higher rates, for preschoolers at the moderate rate and for school age children at the lower rate.

- If the payment rates do not reflect individual rates for the full range of providers - center-based, group home, family and in-home care -- explain how the choice of the full range of providers is made available to parents.

Not applicable

- At what percentile of the current Market Rate Survey is the State rate ceiling set? If it varies across categories of care, please describe.

In 2005, DHR significantly increased rates for all types of care, resulting in rates at or above the 50th percentile of 2003 Market Rate Survey. Some providers received an increase of over \$20 per week per child. Upon completion of the 2005 Market Rate Survey, this correlates to at least the ____th percentile of the new rates. This change was aimed at allowing better access to child care settings statewide for CAPS clients.

- Does the State have a tiered reimbursement system (higher rates for child care centers and family child care homes that achieve one or more levels of quality beyond basic licensing requirements)?

☐ Yes. If yes, describe:

X No

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3.3 Eligibility Criteria for Child Care

- 3.3.1 Complete column (a) and (b) in the matrix below. Complete Column (c) ONLY IF the Lead Agency is using income eligibility limits lower than 85% of the SMI).

Georgia is proposing to establish an entry level maximum income limit and a higher maximum income limit for clients already approved for CAPS. Therefore, we are showing two charts to reflect these limits.

This chart reflects entry level maximum income limits:

			IF APPLICABLE	
Family Size	(a) 100% of State Median Income (SMI) (\$/month)	(b) 85% of State Median Income (SMI) (\$/month) [Multiply (a) by 0.85]	(c) Income Level, lower than 85% SMI, if used to limit eligibility	
			(d) \$/month	(e) % of SMI [Divide (d) by (a), multiply by 100]
1	\$2,699	\$2,294	\$1,276	47%
2	\$3,530	\$3,000	\$1,711	48%
3	\$4,360	\$3,706	\$2,145	49%
4	\$5,191	\$4,412	\$2,580	50%
5	\$6,022	\$5,119	\$3,015	50%

This chart reflects the maximum income limits allowed for families already approved for CAPS:

			IF APPLICABLE	
Family Size	(a) 100% of State Median Income (SMI) (\$/month)	(b) 85% of State Median Income (SMI) (\$/month) [Multiply (a) by 0.85]	(c) Income Level, lower than 85% SMI, if used to limit eligibility	
			(d) \$/month	(e) % of SMI [Divide (d) by (a), multiply by 100]
1	\$2,699	\$2,294	\$1,475	55%
2	\$3,530	\$3,000	\$1,978	56%
3	\$4,360	\$3,706	\$2,481	57%
4	\$5,191	\$4,412	\$2,983	57%
5	\$6,022	\$5,119	\$3,486	58%

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If the Lead Agency does not use the SMI from the most current year, indicate the year used:

If applicable, the date on which the eligibility limits detailed in column (b) became or will become effective:

- 3.3.2 How does the Lead Agency define “income” for the purposes of eligibility? Is any income deducted or excluded from total family income, for instance, work or medical expenses; child support paid to, or received from, other households; Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments? Is the income of all family members included, or is the income of certain family members living in the household excluded? Please describe and/or include information as *Attachment E*. (§§98.16(g)(5), 98.20(b))

Gross Income includes gross wages/salary and unearned income, such as child support. Garnishments are included when considering gross income.

Gross wages/salary includes income earned from work/employment, including base pay, and tips, commissions, piece rate payments and cash bonuses, which equal minimum wages prior to deductions.

Incomes from TANF, SSI, Adoption Subsidy, Housing Assistance, etc. are not included when calculating the family’s gross income.

See Attachment C identified as Applicable and Non-Applicable Income for a detailed description of applicable income sources which are relevant to subsidized child care and non-applicable income sources which are excluded from computation of monthly gross income.

- 3.3.3 Has the Lead Agency established additional eligibility conditions or priority rules, for example, income limits that vary in different parts of the State, special eligibility for families receiving TANF, or eligibility that differs for families that include a child with special needs? (658E(c)(3)(B), §98.16(g)(5), §98.20(b))

☒ Yes, and the additional eligibility criteria are: (Terms must be defined in Appendix 2)

☐ No

Georgia has established service priorities to ensure that certain populations receive subsidized child care, if eligible, without being placed on a waiting list. These priority guidelines are applied statewide. The populations who receive priority services are:

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- **TANF applicants or recipients participating in state approved work, school or training activities;**
- **TANF applicants or recipients who have their TANF denied or terminated due to employment related reasons who need transitional child care;**
- **Families with an active child protective services case or court-ordered supervision case where child care is part of the safety/case plan;**
- **Children who are in DFCS custody;**
- **Adults who receive TANF as payees only for children in their care;**
- **Minor parents attending high school;**
- **Families whose children have special needs;**
- **Families whose children attend Head Start or Georgia lottery funded Pre-Kindergarten and need extended day care for the child; and**
- **Children in Family Foster Homes when the foster parent is working.**

Eligible individuals who do not meet at least one of the criteria to receive priority services receive subsidized child care based on funding availability.

- 3.3.4 Has the Lead Agency elected to waive, on a case-by-case basis, the fee and income eligibility requirements for cases in which children receive, or need to receive, protective services, as defined in Appendix 2? (658E(c)(3)(B), 658P(3)(C)(ii), §98.20(a)(3)(ii)(A))

☒ Yes, and the additional eligibility criteria are: (Terms must be defined in Appendix 2)

☐

No

☐

Not applicable. CCDF-funded child care is not provided in cases in which children receive, or need to receive, protective services.

- 3.3.5 Does the Lead Agency allow CCDF-funded child care for children above age 13 but below age 19 who are physically and/or mentally incapable of self-care? (Physical and mental incapacity must then be defined in Appendix 2.) (658E(c)(3)(B), 658P(3), §98.20(a)(1)(ii))

☒ Yes, and the upper age is **18**.

☐

No

- 3.3.6 Does the Lead Agency allow CCDF-funded child care for children above age 13 but below age 19 who are under court supervision? (658P(3), 658E(c)(3)(B), §98.20(a)(1)(ii))

☒ Yes, and the upper age is **18**.

☐

No

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3.3.7 Does the State choose to provide CCDF-funded child care to children in foster care whose foster care parents are not working, or who are not in education/training activities? (§§98.20(a)(3)(ii), 98.16(f)(7))

☒ Yes. (**NOTE:** This means that for CCDF purposes the State considers these children to be in protective services.)

☐ No

3.3.8 Does the State choose to provide child care to children in protective services? (§§98.16(f)(7), 98.20(a)(3)(ii)(A) & (B))

☒ Yes

☐ No

3.4 Priorities for Serving Children and Families

3.4.1 Describe how the State prioritizes service for the following CCDF-eligible children: (a) children with special needs, (b) children in families with very low incomes, and (c) other. Terms must be defined in Appendix 2. (658E(c)(3)(B))

Georgia has established service priorities to ensure that families receive subsidized child care, if eligible, without being placed on a waiting list. These populations are:

- **Applicants for TANF who need child care in order to search for jobs;**
- **TANF recipients engaged in state approved employment, education and/or training activities as listed on their Personal Work Plans;**
- **Families no longer eligible for TANF due to employment income but who still meet income eligibility criteria;**
- **Families with children who have special needs;**
- **Children in open protective service cases or court-ordered supervision cases;**
- **Children who are in DFCS custody.**
- **Minor parents attending high school who need child care services;**
- **Adults who receive TANF as payees only for children in their care; and**
- **Families whose children attend Head Start or Georgia's Pre-K who need extended day care.**
- **Children in Family Foster Homes when the foster parent is working.**

3.4.2 Describe how CCDF funds will be used to meet the needs of: (a) families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), (b) those attempting to transition off TANF through work activities, and (c) those at risk of becoming

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dependent on TANF. (658E(c)(2)(H), Section 418(b)(2) of the Social Security Act, §§98.50(e), 98.16(g)(4))

Georgia requires all adults who are included in a TANF grant to participate in employment services unless they meet the exemption criteria. When needed to participate in a work activity, child care is available to all TANF applicants and recipients.

Families leaving TANF for employment related reasons have access to subsidized child care for one year if the families continue to meet program requirements. No fee will be charged for 6 months after leaving TANF. Thereafter, a fee will be assessed based on the CAPS fee chart. After one year of transitional care, they can continue in the program as long as they meet eligibility requirements and funds are available.

In addition, TANF eligible families can receive child care if they are working, choose not to use their TANF months, and meet basic CAPS requirements. These families are diverted from applying for TANF and can save their TANF months for a time when the benefit is needed most.

Georgia allocates funds for families who are at risk of becoming dependent on TANF. These families can receive subsidized care if they meet program requirements and if funds are available. Often families are referred to other opportunities, such as Pre-K sites or Head Start, and referred to the local child care resource and referral agency. The local child care resource and referral agencies help the families find programs that meet the families' needs including child care programs that offer sliding fees or scholarships.

3.4.3 Does the Lead Agency maintain a waiting list?

- ☒ Yes. If yes, for what populations? Is the waiting list maintained at the State level? Are certain populations given priority for services, and if so, which populations? What methods are employed to keep the list current?

Families who inquire about subsidized child care are screened to determine if they meet the criteria for priority services. Populations receiving priority services are listed in section 3.4.1. Families who do not meet the criteria for priority services are placed on an inquiry list. As funds become available, these families are served on a first-come, first-serve basis, if eligible. Families may be referred to local Resource and Referral agencies for information about other placements which offer scholarships or reduced fees based on a sliding income scale.

- ☐ No. If no, does the Lead Agency serve all eligible families that apply?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

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Are there other ways that the Lead Agency addresses situations in which funding is not sufficient to serve all families that are technically eligible under State policies? If so, describe.

3.5 Sliding Fee Scale for Child Care Services

- 3.5.1 A sliding fee scale, which is used to determine each family's contribution to the cost of child care, must vary based on income and the size of the family. A draft copy of this sliding fee scale for child care services and an explanation of how it works is provided as Attachment **F**.

The attached fee scale was or will be effective as of October, 2005.

Will the Lead Agency use additional factors to determine each family's contribution to the cost of child care? (658E(c)(3)(B), §98.42(b))

X Yes, and the following describes any additional factors that will be used:

The family's total assessed fees (co-payments) are based on the family's size and income, regardless of the number of children who are in care. In FFY 2006, a family may pay 10%, 12% or 15% based on the amount of the family's weekly gross income.

Georgia links eligibility for child care to the Federal Poverty Level. Families will be considered income eligible if their applicable income is equal to or below 160% of the federal poverty level (FPL). Once a family receives subsidized child care services, the family remains eligible if their applicable income is equal to or below 185% of FPL. (The Lead Agency uses Federal Register, Vol. 70, No. 33, February 18, 2005, pp. 8373-8375, for FPL.)

☐ No

- 3.5.2 Is the sliding fee scale provided in the attachment in response to question 3.5.1 used in all parts of the State? (658E(c)(3)(B))

X Yes

☐ No, and other scale(s) and their effective date(s) are provided as Attachment ____.

- 3.5.3 The Lead Agency may waive contributions from families whose incomes are at or below the poverty level for a family of the same size, (§98.42(c)), and the poverty level used by the Lead Agency for a family of 3 is: **\$16,090 annually**.

The Lead Agency must elect ONE of these options:

☐ ALL families with income at or below the poverty level for a family of the same size ARE NOT required to pay a fee.

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- ☐ ALL families, including those with incomes at or below the poverty level for families of the same size, ARE required to pay a fee.
- X** SOME families with income at or below the poverty level for a family of the same size ARE NOT required to pay a fee. The following describes these families:

Fees are not assessed for child care when:

- **The child receiving care is in DFCS custody;**
- **The adult is a TANF applicant or recipient who is participating in state approved work activities; or**
- **The child is receiving care only on an occasional part-time or hourly basis.**
- **Families of any size have an annual income under \$3,601.**

- 3.5.4 Does the Lead Agency have a policy that prohibits a child care provider from charging families any unsubsidized portion of the provider's normal fees (in addition to the contributions discussed in 3.5.1)? (§98.43(b)(3))

☐ Yes. Please describe:

X No.

- 3.5.5 The following is an explanation of how the copayments required by the Lead Agency's sliding fee scale(s) are affordable: (§98.43(b)(3))

Family co-payments for FFY 2006 are limited to 10%, 12% or 15% depending on the amount of the family's gross weekly income. Adults applying for or receiving TANF are assessed no family co-pay. Additionally, families of any size with an annual income under \$3,601 do not pay a fee.

The state hopes to be able to serve more families from the waiting list by increasing families' co-payments as they become financially able to share in a higher cost of care.

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**PART 4
PROCESSES WITH PARENTS**

4.1 Application Process

The following describes the process for a family to apply for and receive child care services (658D(b)(1)(A), 658E(c)(2)(D) & (3)(B), §§98.16(k), 98.30(a) through (e)). If the process varies for families based on eligibility category, for instance, TANF versus non-TANF, please describe. The description should include:

- How parents are informed of the availability of child care services and about child care options
- Where/how applications are made
- Who makes the eligibility determination
- How parents who receive TANF benefits are informed about the exception to individual penalties as described in 4.4
- Length of eligibility period including variations that relate to the services provided, e.g., through collaborations with Head Start or pre-kindergarten programs
- Any steps the State has taken to reduce barriers to initial and continuing eligibility for child care subsidies

Pamphlets, literature and child care information are distributed by local child care resource and referral agencies. The DFCS web site (<http://www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/caps>) explains the subsidized child care program and provide contact information for the local DFCS offices. Family Independence Case Managers, who are involved with families through the state's TANF Employment Services program also inform families of the availability of subsidized child care as a support service.

Applications for subsidized child care are available in each Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) office. Families are informed of their child care options and have their eligibility for services determined by case managers in the DFCS office. The case managers determine eligibility based on the need for care (whether the adult is participating in a state approved activity), income, and residence.

Families choose their child care providers. The choice is limited if the chosen provider has an active child protective services case, or does not meet state regulatory or health and safety requirements. DFCS case managers assist families in choosing child care services that meet the need of the families, when requested. Child care resource and referral agencies also offer assistance to families.

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Adults who are TANF applicants or recipients and who need child care to participate in a state approved employment, training or education activities receive priority child care services when funds are limited. These adults are not placed on a waiting list for subsidized child care.

The TANF/Employment Services case manager is responsible for informing single custodial parents that they may be exempt from work requirements if they have a child under 12 months of age in their care. Similarly, the TANF/Employment Services case manager is responsible for informing single custodial parents with children under six years of age that they cannot be sanctioned for failing to work if they cannot locate accessible, affordable, appropriate child care services. Georgia has had no reports of single custodial parents who have been unable to obtain accessible, affordable and appropriate child care for a child under 6 years of age.

The eligibility period for subsidized child care is for one year. There is no variation on the one year eligibility period for families whose children are enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K program or Head Start.

The case manager monitors each case at six-month intervals to ensure continued eligibility. To reduce barriers for receiving services, the state allows families to mail in documentation of income at the six-month review, thereby permitting the families to comply with requirements without having to take time off from work to attend an eligibility interview.

4.2 Records of Parental Complaints

The following is a detailed description of how the State maintains a record of substantiated parental complaints and how it makes the information regarding such parental complaints available to the public on request. (658E(c)(2)(C), §98.32))

State law requires the licensing agency, Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), to investigate complaints of all regulatory violations in family day care homes, group day care homes, child care learning centers, and in child care programs that are exempt from licensure and programs that may be operating illegally.

When there are rules violations and pending adverse action, the legal action could include revoking or suspending the facility's license to operate, requiring restrictions such as limiting admission, or imposing a civil monetary penalty.

DECAL maintains information regarding complaint investigations in state licensure files. Under the provisions of the Georgia Open Records Law, O.C.G.A. Sections 50-18-70 through 50-18-77, this information is available to the public. State and federal

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laws consider all licensure files open records except for that specific information otherwise protected. Persons may review files by appointment. The request can be by telephone followed with a written request or in writing.

DECAL posts reports of the recent monitoring visits to child care programs on the Internet (<http://www.decal.state.ga.us/CCS/CCSMain.aspx>). Families can access the site, enter the name of the child care program and other identifying information and view the recent inspections. Information about rules violations and adverse actions are also posted on this web site.

DECAL also provides for a “Consultant of the Day” who is available from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. to provide parents and other interested individuals verbal information regarding the licensure history of a child care facility.

4.3 Unlimited Access to Children in Child Care Settings

The following is a detailed description of the procedures in effect in the State for affording parents unlimited access to their children whenever their children are in the care of a provider who receives CCDF funds. (658E(c)(2)(B), §98.31))

State licensing and registration rules require unlimited access by parents to their children while in care. Rules require that a sign be posted in a public place stating that parents have access to all child care areas. Informal providers who are not required to be licensed or registered are also required to allow parents unlimited access to their children. DFCS notifies informal providers of this requirement during enrollment.

4.4 Criteria or Definitions Applied by TANF Agency to Determine Inability to Obtain Child Care

The regulations at §98.33(b) require the Lead Agency to inform parents who receive TANF benefits about the exception to the individual penalties associated with the work requirement for any single custodial parent who has a demonstrated inability to obtain needed child care for a child under 6 years of age.

In fulfilling this requirement, the following criteria or definitions are applied by the TANF agency to determine whether the parent has a demonstrated inability to obtain needed child care:

NOTE: The TANF agency, not the Child Care Lead Agency, is responsible for establishing the following criteria or definitions. These criteria or definitions are offered in this Plan as a matter of public record. The TANF agency that established these criteria or definitions is:

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TANF Unit of the Employment Services Section of the Division of Family and Children Services in consultation with the Child Care Unit of the Division of Family and Children Services.

- "appropriate child care":

Care that meets state's licensing/minimum health and safety standards, is available, and meets the needs of the family and child.

- "reasonable distance":

Care that is within a forty-five minute radius of the parent's home or work activity.

- "unsuitability of informal child care":

Care that does not meet state's minimum health and safety standards.

- "affordable child care arrangements":

Care in which the state participates at a minimum of 50% of the cost of care for the family and the provider accepts up to the maximum DFCS rate.

PART 5
ACTIVITIES & SERVICES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY OF
CHILD CARE

5.1 Quality Earmarks and Set-Asides

- 5.1.1 The Child Care and Development Fund provides earmarks for infant and toddler care and school-age care and resource and referral services as well as the special earmark for quality activities. The following describes the activities; identifies the entities providing the activities; and describes the expected results of the activities.

Infants and toddlers:

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning offers the voluntary Standards of Care program and the Homes of Quality program to child care learning centers, group day care homes and family day care homes to enhance the quality of child care in Georgia by addressing brain research and appropriate learning activities for infants and toddlers. Centers and homes participating in the program provide stimulating learning environments, meet stringent health and safety standards, and implement educationally appropriate activities that foster learning.

The voluntary Standards of Care program is available statewide to licensed child care learning centers that have been operating in good standing for at least one year (<http://www.decal.state.ga.us/OI/SoC/SocMain.aspx>). Child care learning centers on military bases and licensed Early Head Start centers may participate.

Centers choosing to participate in the Standards of Care program are eligible to participate in free training specifically designed to address the learning needs of infants and toddlers. The training sessions were developed using the internationally recognized *Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-R* (ITERS-R). Centers may choose to receive free on-site technical assistance to help guide and support the child care learning centers as they make changes to increase the quality and meet the standards in the ITERS-R. Before technical assistance begins, a baseline observation, using the ITERS-R, is conducted. Centers may choose to apply for a quality enhancement grant to be used to purchase materials in the ITERS-R classrooms. Centers completing the Standards of Care program and meeting scoring requirements as measured by the ITERS-R earn the Center of Distinction or Center of Recognition designation.

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The voluntary Homes of Quality program is available statewide to registered family day care homes and licensed group day care homes that have been operating in good standing for at least one year (<http://www.decal.state.ga.us/default.aspx>). The program assists and recognizes home-based providers who offer a rich interactive environment for infants and toddlers. Caregivers participating in the program receive free training based on the internationally recognized *Family Day Care Rating Scale* (FDCRS). The homes may choose to receive free on-site technical assistance. Before technical assistance begins, a baseline observation using the FDCRS is conducted. Homes completing the Homes of Quality program and meeting scoring requirements as measured by the FDCRS earn the Home of Distinction or Homes of Merit designation.

Independent observers use the FDCRS or the ITERS-R instrument to gather baseline data before technical assistance is provided. Then different independent observers use the FDCRS or ITERS-R (<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/%7Eecers/>) to evaluate the program to determine if it meets the criteria for a Center/Home of Distinction or Center of Recognition or Home of Merit. This data will allow the state to quantify the changes in the child care environments of participating programs.

The Homes of Quality and Standards of Care programs will increase the number of high-quality child care settings for infants and toddlers across the state. These programs will establish a stronger infrastructure for quality child care settings and will provide a statewide system that parents can use to judge program quality.

Resource and referral services:

The mission of the Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) Agencies is to support the improvement of quality, availability, and affordability of child care. The child care resource and referral agencies link families to providers. The R&Rs provide a database for parents who are seeking child care for typically developing children as well as inclusive environments for children with special needs.

The R&Rs provide training, technical assistance, and quality improvement funds for child care professionals working with young children in their homes, group homes or child care learning centers. In addition, resource and referral agencies furnish services to individuals who are seeking to operate licensed child care learning centers and individuals seeking to open registered family or licensed group day care homes. Each R&R offers a lending library for use by the community.

In working to accomplish its mission, each of the R&Rs collaborate with early childhood and school age programs to meet the needs of children and

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families in their assigned region. The state of Georgia has R&Rs in 14 regions serving all 159 counties of the state. The geographic regions reflect the economic development and correspond to the DHR service regions. This assists the R&Rs in their collaborative work with the Lead Agency and the Georgia Department of Economic Development.

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning contracts with not-for-profit agencies, colleges and a university to provide the Child Care Resource and Referral. Nine of the 14 R&R contracts are with not-for-profit agencies: Coastal Coalition For Children, Inc; Community Connections/211, Inc.; Concerted Services, Inc.; Kids Advocacy Coalition, Inc.; Lutheran Services, Inc.; Quality Care for Children, Inc. (holds 3 contracts); and Visions for Sumter: Seeing Through Young Eyes, Inc.

Four of the contracts are held by state colleges and one contract is held by a state university: Columbus State University, Darton College, Flint River Technical College, Gainesville College, and Swainsboro Technical College.

Each R&R is monitored for compliance with the contract. Monitoring includes two site visits per contract period and monthly reviews of each R&R's programmatic, statistical, and fiscal reports. Each R&R is expected to provide the contracted services to their assigned regions based on a common set of deliverables.

School-age child care:

Because the Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning uses funds to purchase services through an annual competitive bid process, the agencies that will receive school age care funds are not yet selected. However, the department plans increase the capacity, supply, and quality of before and after school programs.

The Lead Agency uses discretionary funds to support the Greensboro Dreamers. Greensboro Dreamers (<http://www.gbdreamers.org/>) is an innovative program that exposes school age children to activities that provide social and academic enrichment. This pilot program serves children from low income families living in a rural Georgia community.

The results of these initiatives will be an increased capacity to serve school age children and an increase in the number of nationally accredited school age care programs which reflects quality child care settings.

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- 5.1.2 The law requires that not less than 4% of the CCDF be set aside for quality activities. (658E(c)(3)(B), 658G, §§98.13(a), 98.16(h), 98.51) The Lead Agency estimates that the following amount and percentage will be used for the quality activities (not including earmarked funds):

\$ **9.33 Million*** (4%)

*** This amount is an estimate based on the federal budget proposal issued February 2, 2005 that seeks to maintain Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funding at the same level as FFY 2004. The amount will be adjusted when the federal CCDBG appropriations are approved and Child Care Bureau releases CCDF budget projections for the states.**

- 5.1.3 Check either "Yes" or "No" for each activity listed to indicate the activities the Lead Agency will undertake to improve the availability and quality of child care (include activities funded through the 4% quality set-aside as well as the special earmark for quality activities). (658D(b)(1)(D), 658E(c)(3)(B), §§98.13(a), 98.16(h))

	Yes	No
• Comprehensive consumer education	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Grants or loans to providers to assist in meeting State and local standards	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Monitoring compliance with licensing and regulatory requirements	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Professional development, including training, education, and technical assistance	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Improving salaries and other compensation for child care providers	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Activities in support of early language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts development	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Activities to promote inclusive child care	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Healthy Child Care America and other health activities including those designed to promote the social and emotional development of children	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Other quality activities that increase parental choice, and improve the quality and availability of child care. (§98.51(a)(1) and (2))	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

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- 5.1.4 Describe each activity that is checked "Yes" above, identify the entity(ies) providing the activity, and describe the expected results of the activity.

Comprehensive Consumer Education

The child care resource and referral agencies, through contracts with Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, provide the leadership for consumer education and public awareness of childhood care and education issues. The goals are to increase family awareness and involvement in quality childhood care and education as it relates to positive child and youth development; and to increase public awareness of the benefits childhood care and education has on society and the economic development of the state.

Each Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) agency is required to provide each parent contacting the R&R with information on early childhood education and care, state rules and regulation, best practices for early education, trends in the industry, legislative updates regarding early care and education along with the referrals and specifically requested information. All R&Rs are required to produce a parent newsletter and host parent workshops for their region. (Refer to Section 5.1 for additional information on the R&Rs.)

Grants or Loans to Providers to Assist in Meeting State Standards

Each child care resource and referral (R&R) is required to administer a Family Child Care Homes and Group Child Care Homes mini-grant project for their assigned region. These mini-grants range from \$1,000 to \$4,000. This is a competitive process entered into by an application and guided by an assessment tool. Materials are purchased to support start-up, quality improvement, expansion, and state regulatory compliance. Each grantee is provided technical assistance and professional development assistance by a quality improvement coordinator employed by the R&R. The R&R also provides technical assistance and compliance support for child care learning centers through the services of a R&R Technical Assistance Coordinator.

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning funds the Non-Profit Child Care Project through a contract with Quality Care for Children, Inc. This project provides start up mini-grants for 10 to 20 new early childhood care and education or school-age programs that are sponsored by faith-based and non-profit groups in Georgia to assist in the final stages of their start-up process. Grants are awarded to groups that have received technical assistance from the Non-Profit Child Care Project (<http://www.qualitycareforchildren.org/nonprofit.htm>). Eligible expenses include toys and equipment needed to complete the licensing process;

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training for staff, especially as required by licensing rules; and minor renovations required by the Fire Department or by licensing rules.

CAPS collaborates with the Child Care Services Division of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, to monitor informal child care providers. The Child Care Services Division facilitates criminal background checks on each new informal provider. A Child Care Services consultant visits each site where child care is provided to ensure that the site meets basic health and safety requirements. A health and safety packet specifically designed for informal providers is delivered at the initial monitoring visit. The CAPS collaboration with Child Care Services funds increased monitoring for registered family day care homes. All new family day care homes are monitored and consultants monitor 20% of existing family day care homes annually.

The expected outcome of these projects is an increased number of child care settings that meet or exceed state regulatory requirements.

Professional Development including Training, Education and Technical Assistance.

Each Child Care Resource and Referral agency contract provides for training, technical assistance, professional development and training for providers in the region and the staff of the R&R.

The Inclusion Coordinators at the Child Care Resource and Referral agencies offer training opportunities for child care providers on topics related to children with special needs. The training is provided either by an Inclusion Coordinator or an expert in the field on a specific topic (i.e. Autism, Down Syndrome, Behavior Management). It is expected that child care providers will begin to feel more comfortable in caring for young children with special needs after going through the training.

Linking Compensation to Professional Development for Early Care and Education Staff

Smart Start Georgia is a public/private partnership among the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation, United Ways of Georgia, the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, and more than 40 additional supporting organizations.

Through a partnership between Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and Smart Start Georgia, the state has implemented “INCENTIVES,” a program designed to enhance the compensation of early care and education professionals to reduce turnover in

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the workforce and to improve the professional qualifications for all staff working with children birth to five (www.smartstartga.org).

Activities in Support of Early Language, Literacy, Pre-Reading, and Early Math Concepts Development

The voluntary Standards of Care and Homes of Quality programs are statewide initiatives to improve the quality in family child care homes, group child care homes, and child care learning centers. These programs are operated by Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. (Refer to 5.1.1)

The Homes of Quality program recognizes home-based child care providers who provide interactive learning environments for children not yet enrolled in school (<http://www.decal.state.ga.us/default.aspx>). The *Family Day Care Rating Scale* (FDCRS) instrument subscales focus on the quality of interactions and activities that influence the development of the children's language and reasoning, literacy, pre-reading and early math skills.

The voluntary Standards of Care program recognizes child care learning centers that provide stimulating learning environments and implement educationally appropriate activities that foster learning for infants, toddlers and preschoolers (<http://www.decal.state.ga.us/QI/SoC/SocMain.aspx>). The Standards of Care program uses the *Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-R* (ITERS-R) instrument in classrooms for children up to age 30 months and the *Early Childhood Environment Scale-R* (ECERS-R) instrument in classrooms for children age 2 ½ to 5 as the basis for the caregiver training, technical assistance, and evaluation. There are separate caregiver trainings: one focusing on the learning needs of infants and toddlers; the other focusing on the learning needs of preschoolers. These instrument subscales focus on the quality of interactions and activities that influence the development of the children's language, reasoning, literacy, pre-reading and early math skills.

Activities to Promote Inclusive Child Care

An Inclusion Coordinator is on staff at each of the Child Care Resource and Referral agencies as provided in the contract with Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. The Inclusion Coordinator is responsible for providing services to families who have children with special needs and the child care providers who care for them. Each of the Inclusion Coordinators provides technical assistance to child care providers who are caring for children with special needs. Technical assistance is given either on the telephone or on site at a child care program. This project is able to offer on going assistance to staff until they are comfortable including a child. Technical assistance varies from room

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arrangement to creating schedules to behavior management in the classroom. Technical assistance is also offered to families or others who are involved with a child with special needs. This service is provided to help others understand the importance of inclusion and give them the guidance and support needed in order to be successful.

The Inclusion Coordinators continually promote inclusive child care through training they provide, meetings they attend in their community, drop-in visits to child care programs, different community groups and agencies (i.e. Kiwanis, Local Interagency Coordinating Councils, Family Connections, county Department of Family and Children Services offices), Health Fairs, Community Fairs and local school systems. Through collaborative efforts in the communities around the state, children with special needs are able to access programs and services as designated by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The expected outcome of the Inclusion Project is increased access for families to child care settings that provide appropriate services to children with special needs.

Healthy Child Care America and other Health Activities including those Designed to Promote Social and Emotional Development of Children

All of the Inclusion Coordinators have completed the Healthy Child Care Georgia Health Consultant training which focuses on social and emotional development in young children. This training has provided guidance for the Inclusion Coordinators when they are in child care programs observing young children with possible social and emotional issues. Now available throughout Georgia, the Inclusion Coordinators offer health input in planning for both the development of child care programs and for the inclusion of children with special needs.

Similarly, many licensing consultants have completed the Healthy Child Care Georgia Health Consultant training. This increases the capacity within the current child care infrastructure and enhances linkages between the child care providers and the resources available to them. The consultant, as a regular monitor of the child care programs, can offer information and refer providers to existing services.

Other Quality Activities that Increase Parental Choice, and Improve the Quality and Availability of Child Care

The child care resource and referral agencies actively increase the supply of child care by recruiting individuals who wish to open family child care homes. Staff at the resource and referral agencies provide orientation

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training and technical assistance to providers starting their child care programs. In addition, resource and referral agencies furnish services to informal providers who wish to become registered family day care home providers.

The Non-Profit Child Care Project offers technical assistance to churches, synagogues, and other non-profit agencies to start or improve quality child care in all 159 Georgia counties. The project includes site visits and consultation; provides technical assistance to non-profit organizations that have concerns about their present child care programs or those that are interested in expanding their part-day programs to full-day programs; offers assistance in developing and refining budgets, staffing patterns, job descriptions, center policies, and fee scales; and helps staff with completing required licensing paperwork and understanding child care regulations.

The expected result of these initiatives is an increased number of child care programs for children in the state.

5.1.5 Is any entity identified in sections 5.1.1 or 5.1.4 a non-governmental entity?

X Yes, the following entities named in this part are non-governmental:

Name: **Quality Care for Children, Inc.**

Type: **Not-for-Profit**

<http://www.qualitycareforchildren.org/index.htm>

Name: **Visions for Sumter, Seeing Through Young Eyes, Inc.**

Type: **Not-for-Profit**

Name: **Community Connections/211, Inc.**

Type: **Not-for-Profit**

<http://www.communityconnection211.com/>

Name: **Concerted Services, Inc.**

Type: **Not-for-Profit**

<http://www.concertedservices.org/default.htm>

Name: **Lutheran Services, Inc.**

Type: **Not-for-Profit**

<http://www.lsga.org/Programs/childr&r.htm>

Name: **Kids Advocacy Coalition, Inc.**

Type: **Not-for-Profit**

Name: **Coastal Coalition for Children, Inc.**

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Type: **Not-for-Profit**

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5.2 Good Start, Grow Smart Planning and Development

This section of the Plan relates to the President's *Good Start, Grow Smart* initiative which is envisioned as a Federal-State partnership that creates linkages between CCDF, including funds set-aside for quality, and State public and private efforts to promote early learning. In this section, each Lead Agency is asked to assess its State's progress toward developing voluntary guidelines on language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts and a plan for the education and training of child care providers. The third component of the President's *Good Start, Grow Smart* initiative, planning for coordination across at least four early childhood programs and funding streams, was addressed in Section 2.1.2.

5.2.1 Status of Voluntary Guidelines for Early Learning. Indicate which of the following best describes the current status of the State's efforts to develop research-based early learning guidelines (content standards) regarding language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts for three to five year-olds.

- ☐ **Planning.** The State is planning for the development of early learning guidelines. Expected date of plan completion: _____
- ☒ **Developing.** The State is in the process of developing early learning guidelines. Expected date of completion: **Draft to be completed July 1, 2005.**
- ☐ **Developed.** The State has approved the early learning guidelines, but has not yet developed or initiated an implementation plan. The early learning guidelines are included as Attachment _____
- ☐ **Implementing.** In addition to having developed early learning guidelines, the State has embarked on implementation efforts which may include dissemination, training or embedding guidelines in the professional development system. The guidelines are included as Attachment _____
- ☐ **Revising.** A State has previously developed early learning guidelines and is now revising those guidelines. The guidelines are included as Attachment _____
- ☐ **Other (describe):**

Describe the progress made by the State in developing voluntary guidelines for early learning since the date of submission of the 2004-2005 State Plan.

The President's *Good Start, Grow Smart* initiative encourages states to set quality criteria for early childhood education in exchange for federal CCDF funds. The voluntary state guidelines, for children ages three to five, should align with the state K-12 standards and include literacy, language and pre-reading activities that can be adapted to various child care settings.

In the 2004-2005 revised state plan, the Lead Agency recommended that the agency now known as Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) assume leadership for aligning the state's early

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learning guidelines for four year olds with the state's K-12 educational standards. Since the 2004-2005 revised state plan was submitted:

- DECAL has revised the learning goals for four-year-old children enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program to align with the Georgia Department of Education's new Performance Standards for kindergarten children.
- DECAL has assumed leadership for developing the voluntary Early Learning Standards for children birth through three years old and expects to have them drafted by July 1, 2005.

Georgia offers universal public kindergarten in the public schools to five year olds. The Georgia Department of Education has developed and recently implemented Performance Standards for five-year-old children attending public school (<http://www.georgiastandards.org/>). The Georgia Performance Standards include Math, English/Language Arts, Science and Social Studies.

Representatives from Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) participated in the development of the Georgia Performance Standards. In June 2004, DECAL revised the Content Standards of Georgia's Pre-K Program to reflect current educational research and align with Georgia's Quality Core Curriculum. The standards (http://www.dec.state.ga.us/PreK/ProjDir_content_standard.html) provide the foundation for instruction in all Georgia Pre-K classrooms and include seven curriculum areas: Language and Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Creative Expression, Social and Emotional Development, and Physical Development.

By coordinating with the Department of Education, DECAL is aligning the Pre-K Content Standards and the voluntary Early Learning Standards for children birth through three with the Georgia K-12 Performance Standards. DECAL has assumed leadership for developing the Early Learning Standards for children birth through three years old. DHR and other partners are supporting this effort.

Georgia's voluntary Early Learning Standards are intended to guide teachers and parents in offering meaningful educational opportunities for children birth through three. The standards address the question, "What should children from birth through three years of age be able to do?"

The following activities have occurred since the submission of the 2004-2005 state plan:

- June, 2004 – Creation of Early Learning Guidelines (ELG) Advisory Panel to develop initial draft of guidelines;
- December, 2004 – Completion of initial draft of Early Learning Standards by the ELG Advisory Panel;
- January, 2005 – Creation of State Experts Panel to review initial draft of the Early Learning Standards;

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- **March, 2005 – Completion of review/modifications of the Early Learning Standards by the State Experts Panel;**
- **March, 2005 – Presentation of voluntary Early Learning Standards draft at DECAL's early learning conference;**
- **March, 2005 – Public meetings begin across the state to present the draft of the Early Learning Standards and solicit feedback from stakeholders;**
- **March – April, 2005 – Creation of a National Experts Panel to review the draft of the Early Learning Standards;**
- **May – June, 2005 – Complete state and national review of the draft of the Early Learning Standards; and**
- **July 2005 – Complete final draft of Georgia's voluntary Early Learning Standards for children birth through 3-years-old.**

If developed, are the guidelines aligned with K-12 content standards?

X Yes. If yes, describe.

Georgia's Pre-K Content Standards were developed to provide a foundation for instruction in all Pre-K classrooms and as a guide for parent-teacher conferences. They reflect current educational research and are aligned with Georgia's Performance Standards for grades K – 12 (<http://www.georgiastandards.org/>). These standards can be used for planning instruction and assessing child growth and development. The Pre-K Content Standards cover seven key curricular areas: Language and Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Creative Expression, Social and Emotional Development, and Physical Development.

Georgia's voluntary Early Learning Standards for children birth through three years old will align with the Pre-K Content Standards and the Head Start Performance Standards, thus ensuring a seamless system of education standards for children P-16.

☐ No.

Please attach a copy of the guidelines. If the guidelines are available on the web, provide the appropriate Web site address:

Georgia's Pre-K Program Content Standards are available on the Internet at: <http://www.decal.state.ga.us/PreK/PreKGuidelines.html>

The draft of the voluntary Early Learning Standards was released on March 23, 2005. The expected date of completion is July 1, 2005.

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5.2.2 Domains of Voluntary Guidelines for Early Learning. Do the guidelines address language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts?

☒ Yes
☐ No

Georgia's Pre-K Content Standards cover seven key curricular areas: Language and Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Creative Expression, Social and Emotional Development, and Physical Development.

The voluntary Early Learning Standards are intended to be a set of appropriate, attainable learning standards for Georgia's youngest children. At the same time, they are designed to be flexible enough to support children's individual rates of development, approaches to learning and cultural context.

The following principles are guiding the development of Georgia's voluntary Early Learning Standards:

- 1. Young children learn best when all aspects of development are treated as interconnected parts;**
- 2. Young children learn through active play and interaction with others which lay the foundation for school success and lifelong learning;**
- 3. Each child develops at an individual rate and exhibits personal approaches to learning;**
- 4. Early learning experiences must support the diverse culture, home language and individual ability of each child;**
- 5. Learning and development are influenced by a child's relationship to family, educational setting, community and culture;**
- 6. Early learning experiences must strengthen the connections between each family and the early childhood program;**
- 7. Quality educational experiences for children are informed by research-based knowledge and practice; and**
- 8. Early childhood teachers play a powerful role in the education of the youngest learners and deserve respect and dignity from the community at-large.**

Do the guidelines address domains not specifically included in *Good Start, Grow Smart*, such as social/emotional, cognitive, physical, health, creative arts, or other domains?

☒ Yes. If yes, describe.
☐ No

As described above, Georgia's Pre-K Content Standards cover seven key curricular areas. Of these seven, Creative Expression, Social and Emotional Development, and Physical Development are not specifically included in *Good Start, Grow Smart*.

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Have guidelines been developed for children in age groups not specifically included in *Good Start, Grow Smart* (children other than those aged three to five)?

☒ Yes. If yes, describe.

☐ No

The voluntary Early Learning Standards for children birth through three years old are in the development phase as described in Section 5.2.1.

- 5.2.3 Implementation of Voluntary Guidelines for Early Learning.** Describe the process the State used or expects to use in **implementing** its early learning guidelines. How are (or will) community, cultural, linguistic and individual variations, as well as the diversity of child care settings (be) acknowledged in implementation? Materials developed to support implementation of the guidelines are included as Attachment N/A

Implementation is in the planning stage. One priority is to ensure the accessibility of the standards to parents and teachers. The standards will be used to support parent-teacher conferences, serve as a curricula guide for the credentialing of early care educators, develop general training for child care professionals, and create activity plans to place on the Internet for parents and teachers to support children as they develop and master each indicator. Standards will also be used for DECAL staff training and development.

- 5.2.4 Assessment of Voluntary Guidelines for Early Learning.** As applicable, describe the State's plan for **assessing** the effectiveness and/or implementation of the guidelines. Written reports of these efforts are included as Attachment **Not Yet Available.**

Though CCDF has not been used for this effort, Georgia's Pre-K Program has implemented a Pilot Assessment Project during the 2004-05 school year. The Work Sampling System, along with additional school readiness indicators, will be used to assess children's progress, individualize instruction and increase parent participation in their child's educational experience.

- 5.2.5 State Plans for Professional Development.** Indicate which of the following best describes the current status of the State's efforts to develop a professional development plan for early childhood providers that includes all the primary sectors: child care, Head Start, and public education.

☐ **Planning.** Indicate whether steps are under way to develop a plan. If so, describe the time frames for completion and/or implementation, the steps anticipated, and how the plan is expected to support early language, literacy, pre-reading and early math concepts.

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- X Developing.** A plan is being drafted. The draft is included as Attachment **G.**

A plan has been drafted and is attached and includes time frames. Work on the plan has begun. Georgia's Early Childhood Professional Development system is currently based on the Early Care and Education Competencies (http://tc.caresolutions.com/key_comp.cfm). The plan includes a review of these competencies (see attached in EXCEL). ECE-3 includes competencies that support intellectual competencies that specifically support early language, pre-reading and early math concepts. In addition, the plan will incorporate the state's Pre-K Content Standards for 4 year olds as well as the voluntary Early Learning Standards being finalized for children age birth through three years old.

- ☐ **Developed.** A plan has been written but has not yet been implemented. The plan is included as Attachment ____
- ☐ **Implementing.** A plan has been written and is now in the process of being implemented. The plan is included as Attachment ____
- ☐ **Other (describe):**

Describe the progress made by the State in a plan for professional development since the date of submission of the 2004-2005 State Plan.

If your State has developed a plan for professional development, does the plan include:	Yes	No
A link to Early Learning Guidelines	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Continuum of training and education to form a career path	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Articulation from one type of training to the next	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality assurance through approval of trainers	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality assurance through approval of training content	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
A system to track practitioners' training	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assessment or evaluation of training effectiveness	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
State Credentials – Please state for which roles (e.g. infant and toddler credential, directors' credential, etc.)	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Specialized strategies to reach family, friend and neighbor caregivers	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
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For each Yes response, reference the page(s) in the plan and briefly describe the Lead Agency's efforts.

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is leading this effort (<http://www.decal.state.ga.us>).

A Link to Early Learning Standards

The plan utilizes the Early Learning Professional Development Competencies (http://www.acetonline.org/information_forms.htm). The plan will link to the Pre-K Content Standards and the voluntary Early Learning Standards being developed for children age birth through three. Page 1.

Continuum of Training and Education to Form a Career Path

There is currently a career path for Early Childhood Education that will be reviewed (download .pdf version of "ACET's Career Path" brochure at: http://www.acetonline.org/information_forms.htm). Page 1.

Articulation from One Type of Training to the Next

Currently, some of the training articulates. The plan includes a goal of articulation of raining. Page 1.

Quality Assurance through Approval of Trainers

The training approval system currently includes standards and the plan includes a review of the system. Page 1.

Quality Assurance through Approval of Training Content

The training currently includes a review of content based on standards. The plan includes a review of standards. Page 1.

A System to Track Practitioners' Training

A system to track training is in place. The plan includes a review of the tracking system to meet additional needs. Page 1.

Assessment or Evaluation of Training Effectiveness

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Assessment and evaluation are included in current system. The plan includes a review of the assessment and evaluation of training. Page 1.

State Credentials

Credentials exist for professionals who care for children birth through 5. Infant/Toddler and Director professional certifications exist in Georgia (certifications http://tc.caresolutions.com/cont_educ.cfm). The plan includes the development of credentials for trainers and those providing consultation services to child care providers. Page 1.

Specialized Strategies to Reach Family, Friend and Neighbor Caregivers

The plan includes involving all stakeholders in the process as well as the child care resource and referral agencies in order to reach family, friend, and neighbor caregivers. Page 1.

For each No response, indicate whether the Lead Agency intends to incorporate these components.

N/A

Are the opportunities available:	Yes	No
Statewide	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
To Center-based Child Care Providers	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
To Group Home Providers	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
To Family Home Providers	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
To In-Home Providers	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (describe):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Describe how the plan addresses early language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts development.

The Pre-K Content Standards and the voluntary Early Learning Standards are the basis for the development of a statewide comprehensive professional development system. These competencies and standards include early language, pre-reading, and early math concepts.

The plan includes the use of the Professional Development Competencies that address the goals and indicators that identify the knowledge, skills and abilities that are essential for qualified practitioners.

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Are program or provider-level incentives offered to encourage provider training and education?

- ☒ Yes. Describe, including any connections between the incentives and training relating to early language, literacy, pre-reading and early math concepts.

Smart Start Georgia and Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning will operate in 2005-2006 the “INCENTIVE\$” program that is designed to enhance the compensation of early care and education professionals to reduce turnover in the workforce and to improve the professional qualifications for all staff working with children birth to five.

Smart Start Georgia (www.smartstartga.org) is a public/private partnership among the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation, United Ways of Georgia, the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, and more than 40 additional supporting organizations.

- ☐ No. If no, is there any plan to offer incentives to encourage provider training and education?

What are the expected **outcomes** of the State’s professional development plan and efforts to improve the skills of child care providers? As applicable, how does (or will) the State assess the effectiveness of its plan and efforts? If so, how does (or will) the State use assessment to help shape its professional development plan and training/education for child care providers?

- **All required state approved training will lead to credentials, certifications, and degrees in the field of early childhood education.**
- **The comprehensive state professional development system will lead to more professional child care providers as evidenced by higher educational levels.**
- **The quality of child care settings will improve as evidenced by an increased number of child care learning centers, and group or family child care homes achieving national accreditation, earning Center of Distinction, Center of Recognition, Home of Distinction or Homes of Merit.**

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PART 6

HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR PROVIDERS

(Only the 50 States and the District of Columbia complete Part 6.)

The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care (NRCHSCC) of DHHS's Maternal and Child Health Bureau supports a comprehensive, current, on-line listing of the licensing and regulatory requirements for child care in the 50 States and the District of Columbia. In lieu of requiring a State Lead Agency to provide information that is already publicly available, ACF accepts this compilation as accurately reflecting the States' licensing requirements. The listing, which is maintained by the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center School of Nursing, is available on the World Wide Web at: <http://nrc.uchsc.edu/>.

6.1 Health and Safety Requirements for Center-Based Providers (658E(c)(2)(F), §§98.41, §98.16(j))

6.1.1 Are all center-based providers paid with CCDF funds subject to licensing under State law that is indicated in the NRCHSCC's compilation?

- ☒ Yes. Answer 6.1.2, skip 6.1.3, and go to 6.2.
☐ No. Answer 6.1.2 and 6.1.3.

6.1.2 Have center licensing requirements as relates to staff-child ratios, group size, or staff training been modified since approval of the last State Plan?
(§98.41(a)(2)&(3))

☐ Yes, and the changes are as follows:

☒ No

6.1.3 For center-based care that is NOT licensed, and therefore not reflected in NRCHSCC's compilation, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

- The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)
- Building and physical premises safety
- Health and safety training

Not applicable

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6.2 Health and Safety Requirements for Group Home Providers (658E(c)(2)(F), §§98.41, 98.16(j))

6.2.1 Are all group home providers paid with CCDF funds subject to licensing under State law that is indicated in the NRCHSCC's compilation? If:

- ☒ Yes. Answer 6.2.2, skip 6.2.3, and go to 6.3.
☐ No. Answer 6.2.2 and 6.2.3.

6.2.2 Have group home licensing requirements that relate to staff-child ratios, group size, or staff training been modified since the approval of the last State Plan? (§98.41(a)(2) & (3))

☐ Yes, and the changes are as follows:

☒ No

6.2.3 For group home care that is NOT licensed, and therefore not reflected in NRCHSCC's compilation, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

- The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)
- Building and physical premises safety
- Health and safety training

Not applicable

6.3 Health and Safety Requirements for Family Providers (658E(c)(2)(F), §§98.41, 98.16(j))

6.3.1 Are all family child care providers paid with CCDF funds subject to licensing under State law that is indicated in the NRCHSCC's compilation? If:

- ☒ Yes. Answer 6.3.2, skip 6.3.3, and go to 6.4.
☐ No. Answer 6.3.2 and 6.3.3.

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6.3.2 Have family child care provider requirements that relate to staff-child ratios, group size, or staff training been modified since the approval of the last State Plan? (§98.41(a)(2) & (3))

☐ Yes, and the changes are as follows:

X No

6.3.3 For family care that is NOT licensed, and therefore not reflected in NRCHSCC's compilation, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

- The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)
- Building and physical premises safety
- Health and safety training

Not applicable

6.4 Health and Safety Requirements for In-Home Providers (658E(c)(2)(F), §§98.41, 98.16(j))

6.4.1 Are all in-home child care providers paid with CCDF funds subject to licensing under the State law reflected in the NRCHSCC's compilation referenced above?

☐ Yes. Answer 6.4.2, skip 6.4.3, and go to 6.5.

X No. Answer 6.4.2 and 6.4.3.

6.4.2 Have in-home health and safety requirements that relate to staff-child ratios, group size, or training been modified since the approval of the last State Plan? (§98.41(a)(2) & (3))

☐ Yes, and the changes are as follows:

X No

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6.4.3 For in-home care that is NOT licensed, and therefore not reflected in NRCHSCC's compilation, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

- The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)

Parents are required to have their child's immunizations current. Caseworkers verify immunizations status at the time they determine the family's eligibility for child care services if the child is not enrolled in school or another setting that verifies immunization status. Bright From the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning monitors all newly enrolled in-home providers. A 20% sample of existing providers is monitored annually. Monitors share information regarding Georgia's immunization law, as well as other health and safety information with providers at this visit.

- Building and physical premises safety

Bright From the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning monitors in-home providers who are required to have a working smoke detector and a working fire extinguisher in the place where they provide care. Additionally, information related to fire drills, proper storage of poisons, guns, matches, etc., covered outlets, safe outdoor play area, covered fireplaces, overall clean and safe area are evaluated and discussed during the monitoring visit.

- Health and safety training

Eight hours of child care related health and safety training is required for in-home providers during the first six months of each enrollment period. Providers may attend health and safety training offered by child care resource and referral agencies, community based agencies, technical schools, hospitals, county extension agencies, Head Start, etc. Child care providers who fail to meet the requirements are dismissed from the program.

6.5 Exemptions to Health and Safety Requirements

At Lead Agency option, the following relatives: grandparents, great grandparents, aunts, uncles, or siblings (who live in a separate residence from the child in care) may be exempted from health and safety requirements. (658P(4)(B), §98.41(a)(1)(ii)(A))

Indicate the Lead Agency's policy regarding these relative providers:

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- ☒ **All** relative providers are subject to the same requirements as described in sections 6.1 - 6.4 above, as appropriate; there are **no exemptions** for relatives or different requirements for them.
- ☐ **All** relative providers are **exempt** from all health and safety requirements.
- ☐ **Some or all** relative providers are subject to different health and safety requirements from those described in sections 6.1 - 6.4. The following describes those requirements and identifies the relatives they apply to:

6.6 Enforcement of Health and Safety Requirements

Each Lead Agency is required to certify that procedures are in effect to ensure that child care providers of services for which assistance is provided comply with all applicable health and safety requirements. (658E(c)(2)(E), §§98.40(a)(2), 98.41(d)) The following is a description of how health and safety requirements are effectively enforced:

Bright From the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) inspects licensed centers and group homes before opening, and, on average, three times annually. They investigate all complaints alleging licensure violations. The action taken is appropriate for the violation. Serious health and safety violations require a corrective action plan. Surveyors make follow-up visits to assure compliance with the plan. The surveyors inspect all new applicants for family day care homes within six months of application. Each year, they inspect 20% or more of the current registered homes.

Facilities have the opportunity to correct rule violations. If they do not comply, several penalties are possible. DECAL may impose monetary fines, restrict the services that the facility can provide, deny an application for noncompliance, or revoke the license to operate.

The Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) licenses child care centers that participate in Georgia's Pre-K program. At least three visits per year to each center to evaluate the center's compliance with state licensing rules. These visits include visits to provide technical assistance related to health and safety issues and quality improvements. DECAL also investigates all complaints that allege licensing violations. The child care center administrator develops a plan of improvement and follow-up is provided by staff to determine compliance.

Should a child care center not maintain compliance or if there are incidents of harm to a child as a result of the center's non-compliance, DECAL may impose adverse actions such as civil penalties, restriction of services, or revocation of the center's license.

Child care providers are required to report injuries to children that require medical attention within 24 hours to the Department of Early Care and Learning. The licensing consultant tracks the incident reports that require further investigation. When injuries to children involve suspected abuse or neglect, the investigation is

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conducted jointly by the licensing consultant and the county Department of Family and Children Services Child Protective Services staff.

- Are child care providers subject to routine unannounced visits (i.e., not specifically for the purpose of complaint investigation or issuance/renewal of a license)?

X Yes, and the following indicates the providers subject to routine unannounced visits and the frequency of those visits:

All family child care homes are visited initially and randomly at 20% thereafter. All follow-up and complaint investigations are unannounced.

All child care centers are visited an average of three times a year. Annual licensing inspections by DECAL to licensed child care programs are unannounced. All follow-up and complaint investigations are unannounced. Technical assistance visits to child care centers are typically announced.

☐ No

- Are child care providers subject to background checks?

X Yes, and the following types of providers are subject to background checks (indicate when such checks are conducted):

All informal child care providers must complete a satisfactory criminal background check.

For family day care homes, a satisfactory criminal background check is required of all adults (18 years and older) living in the home. Any assistants helping with the children must also successfully complete a criminal background check.

In child care centers, a satisfactory criminal background check is required of all teachers, assistants, and directors.

☐ No

- Does the State require that child care providers report serious injuries that occur while a child is in care? (Serious injuries are defined as injuries requiring medical treatment by a doctor, nurse, dentist, or other medical professional.)

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☒ Yes, and the following describes the State's reporting requirements and how such injuries are tracked (if applicable):

☐ No

Child care providers are required to report, within 24 hours, any serious injury requiring medical care. An incident report is entered in the computer system for tracking. The investigator completes an investigation to determine if there is a rule violation. Serious health and safety violations require a corrective action plan. Department of Early Care and Learning staff make follow-up visits to assure compliance.

- Other methods used to ensure that health and safety requirements are effectively enforced:

Child care providers that participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) are reviewed ensure that the participant is operating the program properly and to provide technical assistance as needed. This review is an analysis of the provider's compliance with program rules and regulations. A corrective action plan will be developed to address any program violations discovered during the course of the review. In addition to scheduled reviews, CACFP sponsors or DECAL staff may visit a program participant to provide technical assistance, follow-up on violations discovered in a previous review or conduct an investigation due to a complaint of the program. Program participants who have repeat violations and are unable to correct the deficiencies may be terminated from the program.

Child care providers are linked to local agencies that can offer on-site technical assistance to meet standards. The local agencies include child care resource and referral agencies, Child Care Health Consultants, and various technical assistance projects that assist programs working to meet standards.

6.7 Exemptions from Immunization Requirements

The State assures that children receiving services under the CCDF are age-appropriately immunized, and that the health and safety provisions regarding immunizations incorporate (by reference or otherwise) the latest recommendations for childhood immunizations of the State public health agency. (§98.41(a)(1))

The State exempts the following children from immunization (check all that apply):

- ☐ Children who are cared for by relatives (defined as grandparents, great grandparents, siblings (if living in a separate residence), aunts and uncles).
- ☐ Children who receive care in their own homes.

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- X** Children whose parents object to immunization on religious grounds.
- X** Children whose medical condition contraindicates immunization.

PART 7
HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS IN THE TERRITORIES

(Only the Territories complete Part 7.)

7.1 Health and Safety Requirements for Center-Based Providers in the Territories
(658E(c)(2)(F), §98.41(a), §98.16(j))

Part 7 is not applicable to Georgia.

For all center-based care, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

- The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)
- Building and physical premises safety
- Health and safety training

7.2 Health and Safety Requirements for Group Home Providers in the Territories
(658E(c)(2)(F), §98.41(a), §98.16(j))

For all group home care, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

- The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)
- Building and physical premises safety
- Health and safety training

7.3 Health and Safety Requirements for Family Providers in the Territories

(658E(c)(2)(F), §98.41(a), §98.16(j))

For all family child care, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

- The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)
- Building and physical premises safety
- Health and safety training

7.4 Health and Safety Requirements for In-Home Providers in the Territories

(658E(c)(2)(F), §98.41(a), §98.16(j))

For all in-home care, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

- The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)
- Building and physical premises safety
- Health and safety training

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7.5 Exemptions to Territorial Health and Safety Requirements

At Lead Agency option, the following relatives may be exempted from health and safety requirements: grandparents, great grandparents, aunts, uncles, or siblings (who live in a separate residence from the child in care). (658P(4)(B), §98.41(a)(1)(ii)(A)). Indicate the Lead Agency's policy regarding these relative providers:

- ☐ **All** relative providers are subject to the same requirements as described in sections 7.1 - 7.4 above, as appropriate; there are **no exemptions** for relatives or different requirements for them.
- ☐ **All** relative providers are **exempt** from all health and safety requirements.
- ☐ **Some or all** relative providers are subject to **different** health and safety requirements from those described in sections 7.1 - 7.4 and the following describes those different requirements and the relatives they apply to:

7.6 Enforcement of Territorial Health and Safety Requirements

Each Lead Agency is required to certify that procedures are in effect to ensure that child care providers of services for which assistance is provided comply with all applicable health and safety requirements. (658E(c)(2)(E), §§98.40(a)(2), 98.41(d)) The following is a description of how Territorial health and safety requirements are effectively enforced:

Are child care providers subject to routine unannounced visits (i.e., not specifically for the purpose of complaint investigation or issuance/renewal of a license)?

- ☐ Yes, and the following indicates the providers subject to routine unannounced visits and the frequency of those visits:
- ☐ No

Are child care providers subject to background checks?

- ☐ Yes, and the following types of providers are subject to background checks (indicate when such checks are conducted):
- ☐ No

Does the Territory require that child care providers report serious injuries that occur while a child is in care? (Serious injuries are defined as injuries requiring medical treatment by a doctor, nurse, dentist, or other medical professional.)

- ☐ Yes, and the following describes the Territory's reporting requirements and how such injuries are tracked (if applicable):
- ☐ No

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Other methods used to ensure that health and safety requirements are effectively enforced:

7.7 Exemptions from Territorial Immunization Requirements

The Territory assures that children receiving services under the CCDF are age-appropriately immunized, and that the health and safety provisions regarding immunizations incorporate (by reference or otherwise) the latest recommendations for childhood immunizations of the Territorial public health agency. (§98.41(a)(1))

The Territory exempts the following children from immunization (check all that apply):

- ☐ Children who are cared for by relatives (defined as grandparents, great grandparents, siblings (if living in a separate residence), aunts and uncles).
- ☐ Children who receive care in their own homes.
- ☐ Children whose parents object to immunization on religious grounds.
- ☐ Children whose medical condition contraindicates immunization.

APPENDIX 1
PROGRAM ASSURANCES AND CERTIFICATIONS

The Lead Agency, named in Part 1 of this Plan, assures that:

- (1) upon approval, it will have in effect a program that complies with the provisions of the Plan printed herein, and is administered in accordance with the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 as amended, Section 418 of the Social Security Act, and all other applicable Federal laws and regulations. (658D(b), 658E(a))
- (2) the parent(s) of each eligible child within the State who receives or is offered child care services for which financial assistance is provided is given the option either to enroll such child with a child care provider that has a grant or contract for the provision of the service; or to receive a child care certificate. (658E(c)(2)(A)(i))
- (3) in cases in which the parent(s) elects to enroll the child with a provider that has a grant or contract with the Lead Agency, the child will be enrolled with the eligible provider selected by the parent to the maximum extent practicable. (658E(c)(2)(A)(ii))
- (4) the child care certificate offered to parents shall be of a value commensurate with the subsidy value of child care services provided under a grant or contract. (658E(c)(2)(A)(iii))
- (5) with respect to State and local regulatory requirements, health and safety requirements, payment rates, and registration requirements, State or local rules, procedures or other requirements promulgated for the purpose of the Child Care and Development Fund will not significantly restrict parental choice among categories of care or types of providers. (658E(c)(2)(A), §98.15(p), §98.30(g), §98.40(b)(2), §98.41(b), §98.43(c), §98.45(d))
- (6) that children receiving services under the CCDF are age-appropriately immunized, and that the health and safety provisions regarding immunizations incorporate (by reference or otherwise) the latest recommendation for childhood immunizations of the State public health agency. (§98.41(a)(1))
- (7) that CCDF Discretionary funds are used to supplement, not supplant, State general revenue funds for child care assistance for low-income families. (P.L. 106-554)

The Lead Agency also certifies that:

- (1) it has procedures in place to ensure that providers of child care services for which assistance is provided under the Child Care and Development Fund afford parents unlimited access to their children and to the providers caring for their children during the normal hours of operations and whenever such children are in the care of such providers. (658E(c)(2)(B))
- (2) it maintains a record of substantiated parental complaints and makes information regarding such complaints available to the public on request. (658E(c)(2)(C))
- (3) it will collect and disseminate to parents of eligible children and the general public, consumer education information that will promote informed child care choices. (658E(c)(2)(D))
- (4) it has in effect licensing requirements applicable to child care services provided in the State. (658E(c)(2)(E))
- (5) there are in effect within the State (or other area served by the Lead Agency), under State or local law, requirements designed to protect the health and safety of children; these requirements are applicable to child care providers that provide services for which assistance is made available under the Child Care and Development Fund. (658E(c)(2)(E))
- (6) procedures are in effect to ensure that child care providers of services for which assistance is provided under the Child Care and Development Fund comply with all applicable State or local health and safety requirements. (658E(c)(2)(G))
- (7) payment rates under the Child Care and Development Fund for the provision of child care services are sufficient to ensure equal access for eligible children to comparable child care services in the State or sub-State area that are provided to children whose parents are not eligible to receive assistance under this program or under any other Federal or State child care assistance programs. (658E(c)(4)(A))

APPENDIX 2 ELIGIBILITY AND PRIORITY TERMINOLOGY

For purposes of determining eligibility and priority for CCDF-funded child care services, lead agencies must define the following *italicized* terms. (658P, 658E(c)(3)(B))

- *attending* (a job training or educational program; include minimum hours if applicable) - **active participation in an education or training activity. Full time attendance in high school or GED is defined by the agency/institution where the activity is offered. Adults enrolled in other education programs and training activities are required to participate in the activity or a combination of activities an average of 25 hours per week for single adult families and an average of 35 hours per week for two adult families.**
- *in loco parentis* - **adult who has assumed responsibility for the care of a minor child.**
- *job training and educational program* - **state approved activities that lead to obtaining an employment skill. These are: work experience, on-the-job training, job skills training, secondary school or equivalent, job search/job readiness, vocational training, and English as a second language.**
- *physical or mental incapacity* (if the Lead Agency provides such services to children age 13 and older) - **That which prevents, impairs, interferes with, or impedes life activities by placing limitations on an individual's ability to fully engage in skills, such as self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, breathing, mobility, seeing, and self-direction.**
- *protective services* - **social services for children who are maltreated (neglected, abused, or exploited) or who are at risk of maltreatment, or who are in state custody/foster care.**
- *residing with* - **the person needing child care and the children for whom care is requested live in the same household.**
- *special needs child* - **a child with a documented physical and or mental condition who is not capable of self care and/or a child who is in foster care with a documented socio-economic need.**
- *very low income* - **at or below 100% of the federal poverty level.**

- *working* (include minimum hours if applicable) - **employment of at least 25 hours per week for single parent families and 35 hours per week for *each* adult in two parent families in exchange for at least federal minimum wages.**
- Additional terminology related to conditions of eligibility or priority established by the Lead Agency: **Not Applicable.**

List of Attachments

- Attachment A: Draft of State Plan for Early Childhood Program Coordination**
To be completed in May 2005
- Attachment B: Summary of Public Comments**
To be completed in May 2005
- Attachment C: DFCS Child Care Reimbursement Rates**
- Attachment D: Market Rate Survey for Georgia**
To be completed in May 2005
- Attachment E: Applicable and Non-Applicable Income Definitions**
- Attachment F: Draft of Sliding Fee Scales**
- Attachment G: Draft of State Plan for Professional Development**